



Sri Jagadguru Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati Swamimah

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
FOREWARD	... i
PREFACE	... iii
I. The Accession	... 1
II. The Realised Soul	... 19
III. South Indian Tour	... 38
IV. Intuitive Perception	... 49
V. Power of Mantras	... 65
VI. Method of Teaching	... 82
VII. Love of Seclusion	... 96
VIII. Ideal Seer	... 112
IX. My contact with Sringeri	... 120
X. The Family Deity	... 138
XI. A Devoted Servant	... 154
XII. True Service	... 169
XIII. Soft and Firm	... 184
XIV. The World Teacher	... 203
XV. Some Teachings	... 215
XVI. Valuable Advice	... 235
XVII. Ascension	... 256

FOREWORD

It will be a truism to state that, if the fundamentals of our religion and way of life have continued to be maintained and preserved down the centuries not with-standing the batterings of conflicting ideologies and the impact of exotic faiths, it is in a very large measure due to Sri Sankara and the philosophy he preached and propounded in his immortal classics. In order to carry his message to posterity, Sri Sankara also established four maths in four principal quarters in India, and of these, the Sarada Pitha that he founded for the South at Sringeri has always remained prominent and far-reaching in influence.

The glory of the Sringeri Pitha can be traced to the fact that, right from the time of Sri Sureswara its first Occupant, the seat has been graced in unbroken succession by a line of Acharyas of exemplary piety, vast learning and dedication to the good of mankind. Many of them were distinguished for their intellectual brilliance, and made invaluable contributions in the realm of religious literature and scholarship. Sri Narasimha Bharati of recent memory (Ugra-Narasimha Bharati as he was popularly known) was an austere Saint of matchless spiritual power who toured the country several times imparting the solace of religion and conferring his blessing on a land torn by internecine feuds and wars. His worthy Successor Sri Sachchidananda Sivabhinava Narasimha Bharati was a Rajayogi whose manifold attainments and accomplishments made him renowned

as a reincarnation of the great Sri Sankara Himself. He founded Academies of learning at Sringeri, Bangalore and other places, discovered the birth place of the Master at Kalady and put it on the spiritual map of India. Above all, he inspired and was instrumental in giving the World the first authentic collection of Sri Sankara's monumental works.

His Holiness Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati Maha-Swamigal was cast in the same mould. He carried on the Sringeri tradition and considerably added to its radiance and lustre. The sweep of his mind and massive intellect and his unique capacity for abstraction and powers of introspection took him to heights transcending human experience. His countenance beamed with compassion, and was at times lit by a smile that seemed to kindle the universe. His austerity and tapas gave him a divine halo, and thousands flocked if only for a glimpse of him. On such occasions as he gave Darshan, one felt it was God incarnate walking the earth.

Sri R. Krishnaswamy Aiyar has given us peeps into his divine personality in various publications with an authenticity born of long association and contact. It is a rare blessing for me to be associated with him in this, his latest offering.

2 Bazlulla Road,
Madras,
5-12-1962.

K. SANKARANARAYANA AIYAR
Retired District Judge.

PREFACE

An oft quoted stanza from the Vishnu Purana proclaims that Brahman being the Highest Good is the most auspicious thing to be ever remembered, for the mere recalling it to our memory dispels immediately everything bad in us and induces in us all that is good.

अशुभानि निराचष्टे तनोति शुभतन्ततिम् ।

स्मृतिमात्रेण यत् पुंसां ब्रह्म तन्मङ्गलं परम् ॥

But it is given to a very few to concentrate even for a moment on Brahman, either in its transcendent aspect as the Formless Absolute Reality or in its relative aspect as God the Ruler of the Universe, for either of these aspects is too immense to be grasped by ordinary minds. We have necessarily therefore to content ourselves with having before our minds' eye some formful manifestation of that Brahman. The Upanishad says that the Knower of Brahman is verily Brahman itself. This statement is a practical hint to us that, when we are unable to contemplate on Brahman, we may contemplate on a Knower of Brahman.

The figures of even Sri Rama, Sri Krishna and other Avatars of God have long ago faded from

sketch of His Holiness Sri Jagadguru Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati Swaminah of Sringeri who demonstrated by His life and attitude the highest ideal preached by our sacred religion. But it must be remembered that, even if a river is in floods, it is not possible for anybody to divert it into his own house much less to retain it there. He must be content to store the water to the extent which he can do. It will be silly to take a pot to the river bank and expect the pot to take in all the water. It may be given to a Sage Jahnu or to a Sri Sankaracharya to perform such feats but ordinary people cannot aspire to imitate either of them; they must be content with what their pots can hold. It is impossible therefore to comprehend by our very limited minds the immense greatness of great souls like His Holiness.

Further, the aspects in which He can be viewed are infinite; His physical appearance may appeal to some; His being the head of the premier Advaita mutt will itself be sufficient for many; the Mutt paraphernalia may appeal to some; His learning may be admired by some; His power of dialectics may impress others; His loving kindness will endear Him to many; His conversation may be relished by some; His inspiring silence itself will be sufficient for others; and so on. It will be

impracticable to enumerate these aspects or to exhaust the instances which will illustrate each one of them. My jottings are necessarily very limited and scrappy and quite out of all proportion to the greatness of His Holiness. I have neither the learning nor the capacity to appreciate and understand His spiritual stature. Nor can I claim to have had any special opportunities of coming into close contact with Him. Even on the few occasions when I approached Him, I have always realised the vast distance that separated me from Him and respected it to my utmost, so that it will be impertinent on my part if I claimed any intimacy with Him. It is therefore not possible for me to recount any incident which may show off the depth of His learning, the clearness of His intellect, His spiritual attainments and such other matters which are all far above my level. I can deal only with some external incidents which even by themselves are quite enough to give an idea, ever so scanty, of His real greatness. I have incorporated some of them here. For some other equally educative incidents, the reader is referred to 'Sparks from a Divine Anvil'.

I am aware that some portion of this book may sound 'Autobiographical' but I see no justification for withholding them when they also reflect the

kindness and greatness of His Holiness. I hope that even the most lay reader will find the book on the whole interesting and instructive.

I deem it a great privilege to bring out this edition on the eve of the Kumbhabhishekam of the magnificent shrine erected at the place of Samādī of His Holiness.

I am greatly indebted to my esteemed friend Sri K. Sankaranaraya Iyer, retired District Judge and President of Sri Sankara Seva Samiti, for his valuable Foreword.

I am thankful also to Sri Ramakrishna Press, Madurai for the neat printing and get up.

25th Febr. 1963, }
Sringeri.

R. KRISHNASWAMI AIYAR

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

Sparks from a Divine Anvil
Dialogues with the Guru
The call of the Jagadguru
Outlines of the Vedānta
Thoughts from the Gita
The Great Equation.

श्रीगुरुभ्यो नमः

THE SAINT OF SRINGERI

CHAPTER I

THE ACCESSION.

The goal of life enunciated in the Upanishads and explained by Sri Sankara Bhagavatpadacharya is for the individual soul to get rid of his limiting individuality and to realise his oneness with the Absolute Reality. This ideal is pitched so high that the ordinary man is inclined to think of it as impossible of attainment. Even the Upanishads, the Gita and other sacred literature dealing with the subject emphasise that it is only a rare one in a million that strives to attain it and that the man who succeeds in his striving is far rarer still. At the same time they point out the glory of that state of perfection and say that to an earnest aspirant it is possible of attainment even in this human embodiment and even in this world. Many a Seer in India has demonstrated to the world such a possibility and proved that the scriptural words are not idle words enunciating an abstract impracticable impossible ideal. But they have mostly contented themselves with

leading a life of complete retirement from worldly concerns giving rise to a general feeling that a man of wisdom is not of this world and cannot be of any use to those who are still in this world and yet would like to have spiritual enlightenment. A remarkable exception to this general rule of modern sages was His Holiness Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati Swaminah, the late Jagadguru who presided over Sri Sringeri Mutt founded by Sri Sankara Bhagavatpadacharya.

Sri Subba Sastri of Sringeri was a great scholar and even while he was young cultivated a habit of detachment and went away to the Himalayas but, at the desire of His Holiness Sri Narasimha Bharati Swaminah, the then Jagadguru of the Mutt, he returned to Sringeri, was made the Asthana Pandit of the Mutt and led a quiet and saintly married life. He had an only son Sri Gopala Sastri who was also a very learned pandit and was at one time expected to be nominated by His Holiness as His successor to the Peetha. But our expectations rarely coincide with the inviolable decrees of destiny. So Sri Gopala Sastri in due course married Srimati Lakshmi Ammal and had fourteen children by her. It was however God's will that only one of them, a boy,

Narasimha by name, should survive. The parents felt keenly that they were being pursued by an inexplicable and relentless fate which deprived them of their children and hoped that, by separating this boy at least from themselves for some time, he might escape the fate of his brothers and sisters. In response to their importunities, Sri Srikantha Sastri the then Agent of the Mutt took the boy under his protection and had him practically as one of his own household.

Lord Sri Krishna has pointed out that, though a spiritual aspirant who has pursued the path of knowledge earnestly but has not realised the goal may be born in a pious and rich family or in a poor saintly family, it is more difficult to have the fortune of being born in the latter for there he will be free from the distractions of wealth and free to engage himself in spiritual pursuits untrammelled by any attractions that the world may offer. It was in such a family that our Narasimha was born on the morning of Sunday the 16th of October 1892. From his childhood he showed not only signs of high intelligence, but evinced an imperturbable temper and an aptitude to avoid company and found quiet retirement and solitude alone congenial to him. When he attained the age of 9,

he had his Upanayanam duly performed in the mutt itself in 1902, under the orders of His Holiness Sri Sachchidananda Siva Abhinava Narasimha Bharati Swaminah, the then Acharya. He was admitted into the Anglo-Canarese school at Sringeri and was studying there for a few years. When he passed a Government Examination in the first class, his father naturally was proud of his son and, with a view to get for him the blessings of His Holiness, he took the boy to His Holiness and mentioned the glad news of the boy's success and prayed for His Holiness's blessings. His Holiness said, "I am glad to hear it. It is quite apparent that the boy is very intelligent and must come up in life. I am sure you wish for him a bright future". The father said "Certainly". His Holiness followed up by saying "If so, cease sending him to the English school and send him instead to our Mutt Pathasala". The father, greatly devoted as he was, to His Holiness and quite confident in the propriety of His Holiness' command, readily assented, took the boy from the English school and had him immediately admitted in the Pathasala.

The boy both by his sharp intelligence and by his exemplary behaviour endeared himself to all

his teachers. He was very studious in his habits and was conspicuous by the absence of any boyish pranks natural to his age. Even when he was punctiliously doing service to his parents or other elders or when he was going to the shops to purchase some article or to post any letter in the post box, his mind was always in his studies. It is said that one day he was walking along the road outside the town limits when he was accosted by somebody and asked where he was going and that it was only then he recollected that he started from the house for some purchase in a local shop. He was interested not only in the acquisition of theoretical knowledge but was ever anxious to verify it by actual practice. Whenever his household duties or his studies did not require his presence, he used to go to the quiet solitude of Sri Vidya Sankara temple and sitting in a corner thereof do some japa or repeat some Stotra, particularly Muka Panchasati, or engage himself in mental contemplation or in deep introspection. To him life was too precious to be spent idly and he never engaged himself in any purposeless talks or pursuits.

His Holiness was taking great interest in the proper conduct of the Mutt Pathasala. Even after

he started in 1907 on a tour in South India, he had the answer papers of the Pathasala students sent to Him in His camps so that He was keeping Himself in touch with them and watching their progress in their respective studies. He was specially struck with and pleased with the very brief and expressive way in which Sri Narasimha Sastri answered his questions. On one occasion His Holiness deputed an official of the Mutt to go to Sringeri for inspecting the Pathasala and noting whether the students were all provided with necessary requisites in time to enable them to pursue their studies whole-heartedly. The official went to Sringeri, inspected the Pathasala, returned to the camp and reported to His Holiness that he made enquiries of everybody separately, that they were all studying earnestly, that their convenience was being well looked after and that he had some minor defects pointed out by some of the students duly rectified.

His Holiness: I am glad to hear that the students are all studious and their convenience is being well attended to. But are the students well behaved and have they peace of mind?

Official: Certainly they are all orderly and peaceful. But it seems to me that our Narasimha

of Sringeri may be a little bit deep and impertinent.

H. H.: That is your opinion. But tell me what really happened?

Official: I asked "Is the food given to you pure and tasty? Do they give you hot water for your oil bath?" and so on. When similar questions were put to other boys, they answered promptly and to the point, but this Narasimha said "What does that all matter? We are being taught our lessons properly." It would appear from this that he has some complaint but is unwilling to give expression to it. As his reply was unlike that of the other boys who frankly talked to me and laid their complaints before me, I had to conclude that he was a little conceited.

H. H.: You must take his words literally. It is not necessary to import any other significance into them. He has simply defined his attitude that he is concerned only with his studies and other considerations do not enter his mind. Know him therefore to be a very good and pure soul.

Thus from the very beginning His Holiness rightly judged the worthiness of Sri Narasimha Sastri and foresaw his future greatness. Apart

from the routine classes in the Pathasala a special course in Tarka Sastra was arranged for him. On His way back from Kaladi where He had gone to consecrate a temple for Sri Sankara Bhagavatpada and another for Sri Sarada, He founded a college at Bangalore for advanced studies in Sanskrit and, soon after His return to Sringeri in 1911, He sent Sri Narasimha Sastri to Bangalore to study the Poorva Mimamsa Sastra so vitally necessary for a proper understanding of Vedanta. Mahamahopadhyaya Mimamsa Kantheerava Vaidyanatha Sastri was the professor of Mimamsa and Mahamahopadhyaya Subrahmanya Sastri and later Mahamahopadhyaya Vidyanidhi Virupaksha Sastri were the professors of Vedanta there. Sri Narasimha Sastri in addition to his own Mimamsa class availed himself of the presence of Sri Virupaksha Sastri to revise his knowledge of Tarka and also to get a good grounding in Vedanta, so much so that within a few months he was well up in all the three Sastras; incidentally, as necessary steps to these, he became very proficient both in Vyakarana and Sahitya. His Holiness was with great interest watching the progress of all the students at Bangalore also and particularly of Sri Narasimha Sastri. It was quite patent that He had a special interest in this disciple of His,

particularly when He prayed to Sri Sarada to make him omniscient soon. This was the burden of His song addressed to the Goddess in the form of four significant stanzas.

सर्वज्ञं श्रीनृसिंहं कुरु शिष्यदयिते सत्वरं मद्दिनघ्नम्

(Bhaktisudhatarangini p. 445)

During this period, indications were not wanting to show that His Holiness evidently intended that Sri Narasimha Sastri should succeed Him in the Sringeri Peetha. Except His Holiness, Sri Krishnarajendra Wodaiyar the then Maharaja of Mysore and Srikantha Sastri the Agent of the Mutt who knew definitely about this intention of His Holiness, no others were able to read aright these indications. Even Sri Narasimha Sastri was not made aware of it. One evening when His Holiness was in Kala Bhairava Temple alone with three Brahmachari Sishyas, as if casually He asked one of them to note down some stanzas which stated "If you are really anxious to cross the ocean of phenomenal life, you must take Sannyasa and take up the study of the true nature of the self with faith and devotion". Sri Narasimha Sastri who was one of those three appropriated that teaching in its entirety as addressed to himself and resolved on taking Sannyasa which

alone suited his temperament. It may be mentioned that of the other two disciples one went away from the mutt and the other married soon after; so it was made clear that the teaching was intended for Sri Narasimha Sastri alone. It will be noticed that even here there is no indication that he was to succeed His Holiness in the Peetha.

Early in 1912 His Holiness felt that His life work was over and that it was time for Him to free Himself from His mortal coil. He instructed one of His intimate devotees Sri Kunigal Rama Sastri to go to Bangalore and bring Sri Narasimha Sastri to Sringeri and also inform His Highness the Maharaja about His intention to nominate him as His successor. This was the first intimation that Sri Rama Sastri had of this intention. He was a very learned scholar and an ardent devotee. He had moved intimately with His Holiness. It is no exaggeration to say that the body of His Holiness had the colour of molten gold and, apart from His spiritual greatness, His majestic physical figure was sufficient to create awe and devotion in all who happened to approach Him. At the time we are speaking of, Sri Narasimha Sastri was very lean and somewhat dark in colour, and from his childhood had no luxury and

had no taste for it either. When His Holiness mentioned his name, Sri Rama Sastri may well be excused if the contrast between the two figures struck him very keenly but he was too good and too devoted to question the propriety of His Holiness' decision. But His Holiness was quick to notice the passing thought and said "Does worth consist in the colour of the skin?" Sri Rama Sastri realised his foolishness in giving room for such a thought in his mind and started gladly on his mission.

The father of the boy though unwilling to part with his only son agreed to accede to the wishes of His Holiness, but the mother declined to do so. His Highness promised all help in the matter but even he could not prevail upon the mother to consent to her only son becoming a Sannyasi. When Sri Rama Sastri was about to return to Sringeri disappointed, Sri Narasimha Sastri himself approached his mother and said "O mother, you have given thirteen of your children unwillingly to the God of Death. Can you not give one willingly to our Acharya? You are evidently under the impression that I shall be marrying and running a home as a householder. It can never be. I am bent only upon Sannyasa. If you accede to

the wishes of His Holiness, you will have not only the merit and satisfaction of obeying Him, but you will have occasion to meet me frequently as I shall then be near you at Sringeri itself; if I become an ordinary Sannyasi, I shall be going away to distant places and it will not be possible for you to meet me at all thereafter. It seems to me that in your own interest you will do well to give way to His Holiness' commands". This firm attitude compelled the reluctant mother to bow to the inevitable. Then with the blessings of the parents, Sri Narasimha Sastri started for Sringeri along with Sri Rama Sastri. But owing to the delay caused at Bangalore they found themselves too late at Sringeri as His Holiness attained freedom from all embodiment on the 20th of March 1912, the day just previous to their arrival at Sringeri. Considering the precarious condition of His Holiness and the delay in the coming of Sri Narasimha Sastri, some of the disciples at Sringeri suggested to His Holiness the names of some alternative nominees but to all these suggestions His Holiness' reply was the same "Let Narasimha come."

As His Holiness had departed from mortal vision, it was necessary to wait till all the ceremonies

were over. Some people taking advantage of this delay sought to put up the claims of others for the successorship and this agitation would have become serious but for His Highness' personal assurance that he was aware that Sri Narasimha Sastri had been definitely nominated by His Holiness and that no other claim was permissible. It is worthy of note that during this interim period Sri Narasimha Sastri did not in the least assert himself or advance any claim on his own behalf but was coolly witnessing what all was happening, as his real aim was only Sannyasa and not the leadership of the Mutt and as he agreed to the latter only in deference to the wishes of His Holiness. His attitude of perfect indifference at that time itself showed that he was the person eminently qualified to occupy the premier Seat of Sri Sankara Bhagavatpada. Indifference to all worldly concerns, phenomenal humility and steadfastness in Dharma were among his inborn characteristics. To illustrate this, I may mention a very simple and significant incident which happened the day before his installation.

There were many a detail and formality to be considered with reference to his taking Sannyasa and to his being installed on the holy seat and for

Brahmachari and that it was not proper for him to seat himself along with his elders. It may be mentioned here itself that, when he was given Sannyasa the next day, these very elderly people prostrated before him and that at that time he did not show any the slightest sign of embarrassment but sat firm in his seat as if he was quite accustomed to prostration being made to him by elders, scholars and high personages for a very long time. The people who noticed this could not but admire his firm grasp of Dharma. He was duly given Sannyasa on the 7th of April 1912 and installed on the Sringeri Peetha the next day. He was given the Sannyasa name of Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati Swaminah.

As at time of the installation His Holiness had not completed His studies in Vedanta, the mutt agent Sri Srikantha Sastri requested Sri Virupaksha Sastry to stay at Sringeri itself and teach Vedanta to His Holiness but he declined to do so saying that as a Grihastha it was not proper for him to teach a Sanuyasi, that His Holiness was very intelligent and well versed and could by Himself study the Sastras without the help of any body else and as that he had the gracious blessings of the previous Acharya in abundance his personal

efforts would be crowned with success. His Holiness was informed about this attitude of that learned Pandit. His Holiness sent word to him.

His Holiness : I understand that you declined to teach me Vedanta any further.

Pandit : Yes, It is no longer proper for me to do so. Further it is not necessary also as your Holiness Himself may study the books.

His Holiness : Why do you say so?

Pandit : As long as your Holiness was a Brahmachari, it was proper for me to teach. Now that your Holiness is a Sannyasi, it will be improper for me to do so.

His Holiness : It is true that Sannyasa means giving up all things. Is study of Vedanta also included in the "all things".?

Pandit : I do not mean to say so. On the other hand, Vedanta must be studied more intensely after Sannyasa. But that study must be only by your Holiness. It will not be proper for a Sannyasi to have a grahastha as his Guru.

His Holiness : That is, as I have become a Sannyasi I cannot prostrate before you or do any service to you as a Guru.

Pandit : Yes, I cannot be a Guru.

His Holiness : Rather, *I* cannot be a Sishya.

Pandit : Quite so.

His Holiness : If there is any prescribed method other than service by which I can learn, I suppose I can adopt it.

Pandit : How can that be?

His Holiness : I am just reminding you that the Sastra which prescribes the method of getting knowledge as service to the Guru

गुरुश्रुत्या विद्या

does not stop there but adds that knowledge can be obtained by giving abundant wealth to the teacher.

पुष्कलेन धनेन वा

As I am a Sannyasi, I have no wealth to give you and, even if the mutt gives you any remuneration, it is not mine. So this alternative also is not open to me. Fortunately there is a third alternative

अथवा विद्यया विद्या

that a particular kind of knowledge can be exchanged for another. I think of availing myself of this third alternative.

Pandit : I am old. At my age of life, what kind of learning can I have from your Holiness in return for the Vedanta that I am expected to teach?

His Holiness : In the mornings, you may give me lessons in Vedanta. In the afternoons, I shall give you lessons in Tarka Sastra.

The Pandit realised at once that in making this suggestion His Holiness really desired to strengthen his knowledge of the Tarka Sastra under the guise of professing to teach it to him and he gladly agreed to this proposal. He stayed on in the Mutt and, in less than three years, His Holiness became a proficient beyond compare in both Tarka and Vedanta. When the Pandit had occasion to mention this arrangement to me years later, he said "Though the arrangement was like this, His Holiness was the real teacher both in the morning and in the evening. While I stayed at Sringeri ostensibly to teach him Vedanta, it was really myself that learnt many a new thing and I deem myself fortunate in having had such an opportunity." His Holiness in his turn had the highest regard and respect for the Pandit not only for his deep erudition and clear exposition but also for his exemplary and saintly living. It may be noted in this context that this veteran scholar took Sannyasa some years later and became the head of the Kudli Mutt.

CHAPTER II

THE REALISED SOUL.

His Holiness the new Acharya, conscious as he was of the fact that he had the gracious blessings of his Guru and was being guided by him at every step, was nevertheless sorely grieved at not having had the opportunity of being trained by him in person. His ambition was to follow rigidly the footsteps of his illustrious Guru and justify the latter's selection of himself as his successor. His intense devotion dictated to him that he must complete the work of renovating the temple of Sri Sarada which was begun even before his Guru started on his Kaladi tour and that he must raise a fine structure over his sacred Samadhi. As both the temples were to be spacious and artistic structures in stone, special articles and artisans had to be sent for from distant places in Madura and Tinnevely Districts in the extreme south of the country. It was possible to finish the work only in 1916. Though a big Mahalinga which was being daily worshipped by the Guru had already been installed in the Samadhi, it was thought proper to have also a more than life size statue in white marble and this work was entrusted

to a famous sculptor Matre of Bombay. When all things were ready, invitations were sent to devotees throughout the length and breadth of India and grand preparations were made for the Kumbhabhishekam in the both the shrines. Devotees flocked in from all sides. Sringeri was a small town far away from any railway station and to make arrangements for the accommodation and feeding of the surging crowds was no easy matter. The Mutt put several rows of temporary cottages for select persons and several sheds for others. The Maharaja of Mysore came there in person and was accommodated in a new building just then built for His Holiness on the northern bank of the River Tunga. The Gaikwar of Baroda and other princes in the north sent their representatives, so also those in the south, and these were all accommodated in the various mutt buildings. A batch of about 100 devotees from the Tinnevely District volunteered their services. It is not possible to describe in detail the several arrangements that were made for the occasion. It is sufficient to say that the secluded Sringeri nestling among radiant hills put on the appearance of a very busy township with all the amenities of modern life. The Kumbhabhishekam was duly performed in the middle of 1916. Though

splendour and pomp characterised the festivities, they blended agreeably with the spiritual atmosphere with which the entire locality was surcharged. Though there were many a thing to see and hear, appreciate and admire and wonder at, the chief attraction for the high and the low, the learned and the illiterate, the old and the young, was the simple and enchanting personality of His Holiness the young Swamiji himself. He radiated about him an atmosphere of serenity and peace which did not clash with the noise and bustle necessarily attendant upon a large congregation of people from all parts of the country gathered together in such a small town as Sringeri on that momentous occasion. The magnificent Darbar held in the front hall of Sri Sarada Temple that night when the various ruling princes of the land, high dignitaries, eminent scholars, and other ardent devotees offered their humble offerings to Sri Sarada and to His Holiness in the shape of costly cloths, ornaments, cash or laudatory verses was for the Gods to see, and the climax was reached when His Holiness, till then quite unaccustomed to address such a gathering, wound up the proceedings in a short and impressive speech in simple chaste and fluent

and appealed to all his disciples to co-operate with him in carrying out the duties of the high office to which he had been called. He picked out a very costly Saree from the presents before him and had it immediately placed on Sri Sarada. Then in due course, the princes, the scholars and others were blessed by His Holiness and appropriate presents made to them, so also to those who took active part in building the two temples. The proceedings came to a close with Deeparadhana to Sri Sarada. Earlier in the evening a conference of the disciples was held in front of the Guru's new temple to concert measures for providing a permanent fund for the daily puja and the annual three days aradhana there and a very influential committee with Sri Rao Bahadur A. Sundara Sastri, the Government pleader of Tinnevely, as the secretary was immediately formed and a good collection made. It may be mentioned here that about a lakh of rupees was collected for this fund without much delay.

It has been stated before that by this time His Holiness had completed his Vedanta studies under Sri Virupaksha Sastri. The latter used to say that the deep knowledge and learning of His Holiness was out of all proportion to his own teaching and could be accounted for only as due to divine

grace.' Sri Srikanta Sastri who had moved with him intimately from his childhood and had been carefully watching his progress could not find any explanation for the phenomenal learning of His Holiness other than the gracious blessings of his revered Guru who had prayed to Sri Sarada more than once to give him a successor who would be a reflection of himself. It is not only that His Holiness was perfect in the knowledge of the various Sastras but he was equally perfect in his knowledge of the vast Mantra literature and equally at home in the sciences of medicine, music, astrology etc., It is not possible to guess how he found time to acquire such an all round proficiency in the midst of his onerous duties both as a Sannyasi and as the head of a great Mutt.

His Holiness was not content with being a profound scholar and a skilful dialectician. After the bustle of the Kumbhabhishekam had subsided, His Holiness set his mind immediately on the practical realisation of the truths learned by him through his exhaustive studies. He felt that he must seek without further delay the grace of Sri Sarada and his Guru intensely and qualify himself to the utmost for the seat of spiritual eminence

which he had been called upon to occupy. Though he continued to attend to his daily routine of duties and to expound the scriptures and the commentaries to deserving students, he spent more time in contemplation, Tapas and introspection. His intense devotion to his Guru and the steady perseverance which characterised his efforts led him in the course of a few years to such an exalted state of self-realisation as could not ordinarily be reached in several lives of genuine effort. He stood unrivalled in learning and stood equally unrivalled in the realisation of the goal of the Vedanta. It may be mentioned in parenthesis that his parents were justly proud of their son and had the supreme satisfaction of seeing for themselves the spiritual eminence which He had attained. The father passed away at a ripe old age in April 1919 and the mother in December 1922.

The passing away of the mother removed the only link that might be said to have existed between His Holiness and the external world and in effect gave him full freedom to engage himself in his congenial pursuit of self-realisation. He had already realised the self but as pointed out by Sri Sankara Bhagavatpada and Sri Vidyaranya there were two more courses, namely, of

Vasanakshaya (Elimination of tendencies) and *Manonasa* (Cessation of mind activity) before the state of *Jivanmukti* could be reached. His Holiness began to apply himself intensely to these further courses. This necessitated his being in trance very frequently, forgetting the external world. When in that state he would forget not only his physical needs but also his routine worships as the head of the mutt, would forget that students were waiting outside expecting to be called in for Vedanta studies, would forget that ardent devotees were anxiously looking forward to a gracious look or an encouraging word from him and would all the more forget that the worldly concerns of this big institution required his advice and guidance. He might fall into a trance in the middle of his Pujā or ablutions or even when he was expounding any impressive passage in the scriptures. The result was a dislocation in the daily routine of the mutt which necessarily inconvenienced the mutt servants and those who sought interviews with His Holiness.

Sri Srikantha Sastri who had been the agent of the mutt for a very long time even during the time of His Holiness's predecessor had been prevailed upon by His Holiness to continue in that office.

As he was not only a very capable officer but was a scholar well versed in the religious routine of the mutt, he was able to carry on the affairs of the mutt, both secular and religious, very efficiently, and himself officiated at the daily puja in the place of His Holiness very often. But, as he came to the mutt very early in his life and had served it for about thirty-two years faithfully and efficiently and spent all his time, energy and capacities only in that service, he was feeling for some time that it was time for him to retire and take rest.

Though he mentioned this idea to His Holiness more than once, His Holiness would only ask him to wait for some time. Sri Sastri became somewhat impatient at this repeated delay and early in 1923 he found occasion to insist upon his being relieved immediately. His Holiness then said, "Please wait for about ten days more. If, after that, you still want to go, you may go." Within a week of this conversation, His Holiness attained the stage of an *Avadhuta*, one who had shaken off all worldly concerns. He did not even dress himself properly, performed no ablutions or puja, retired completely into himself and became quite oblivious of the world. Even Sri Sastri and others who had moved closely with him could not well understand this state except that it was not normal.

Sri Sastri then realised the significance of His Holiness' words as he felt that he could not possibly leave the mutt when His Holiness was in that state and when there was none else competent to conduct the manifold affairs of the mutt. Very reluctantly he reconciled himself to the idea of continuing in the mutt till a more propitious time. Punctilious as His Holiness used to be in all his actions and habits, this change to quite an uncommon state was beyond the comprehension of anybody. There was no regularity even in the daily bath and daily meal. Time did not count with him and the ordinary rules of conduct, worldly or spiritual, were no more for him. It would happen that for days together he remained without bath, food or sleep but the want of these necessities of life did not affect him in the least for he ever looked fresh and his face was ever beaming with supernal lustre though the body would show signs of weakness. He continued in this state for months together. Some people who were strangers to such an experience which was quite out of the normal began to think and to say that His Holiness was really unwell and that his state might be due to a kind of mental aberration. Devotees who honestly believed so tried to "cure" him of this "ailment" either by medicine or by

Mantra and learned by experience that their attempts were not only futile but quite uncalled for. His behaviour in such periods of retirement into himself naturally marked him out from other people who could possibly have no conception of the supra-normal experiences had by him.

As his plane of experience was beyond the grasp of the common men, various rumours became afloat about him. A high personage at Mysore hearing them desired to know the exact truth and deputed a doctor to go to Sringeri for this purpose. The doctor accordingly went to Sringeri, was observing His Holiness every morning and evening and was writing to Mysore daily. It so happened that I also went to Sringeri at that time and stayed in the same building as the doctor and we became slightly acquainted with each other. One afternoon he said "I think of making His Holiness speak to-day."

K: Did His Holiness then not speak to you all these days?

Doctor: No.

K: You are posting letters to Mysore daily.

Doctor: Yes. I have been asked to do so.

K: If His Holiness has not even spoken to you, what can you possibly write about?

Doctor: I have been writing "His Holiness continues in the same state."

K: If you say "same state", you must have described it at least in your first letter.

Doctor: No doubt so. But what I stated in my first letter was only this "I am not able to understand His Holiness' state." In my subsequent letter I am simply referring to the "same state."

K: You intend to make His Holiness talk to-day and find out the exact nature of his state?

Doctor: I hope to.

K: Is there any objection to my accompanying you?

Doctor: Nothing. You may come. I have asked the local doctor also to come.

Accordingly all the three of us went to the other side of the river. The building was open. We entered and found His Holiness sitting in his usual posture. His eyes were certainly open but he did not seem to be seeing anything. Just when we entered he signed to us to sit down and then relapsed into his mood. The doctor had no mind

to disturb him. We sat on like this for a fairly long time and finally realising that the sun was about to set we stood up. His Holiness looked up. Availing himself of this opportunity, the doctor began to speak.

Doctor : I think of returning home tomorrow.

H. H : Is your business here finished ?

It was a very simple question. But if the doctor had given an answer "Yes" it would not have been true for he did not succeed at all in the mission that took him to Sringeri; if he had said "No" he must necessarily assign some other justification for his leaving Sringeri. Thus this question placed him in a dilemma.

Doctor : It is long since I left my home. I desire to return.

H. H : Yes. You may do so.

Then we all prostrated and just when we were coming out His Holiness asked the doctor "Is your mother in good health?" The doctor said "Yes". Then His Holiness nodded his head and we all came out. It is no doubt true that the doctor did make His Holiness talk but I was unable to gauge what exactly the doctor learned from that

talk about the nature of His Holiness' state. We were on our way back to our lodgings.

Doctor: Did you notice how mischievous His Holiness was?

I did not only not understand his question but thought it highly improper. But as our acquaintance was only slight, I kept down my resentment and coolly replied to him.

K: I did not notice any mischief.

Doctor: Have I no wife, no children, no brothers and sisters? He did not enquire till now about the welfare of any of them and to-day He asks only about my mother. Is it not mischievous?

K: I do not see anything mischievous in it. Evidently he asked about the oldest member of your family.

Doctor: Four or five years back my mother was suffering from some abdominal trouble. I myself treated her and had her treated by eminent doctors but without any effect. I had to go to Sringeri just about that time and my mother said, "Now that you are going to Sringeri, can you not mention my ailment to His Holiness and get from him relief for me?" When I came here I told this to His Holiness and he was pleased to give

me a small packet of Vibhuti and asked me to mix it with tepid water and smear it on her stomach. As soon as I returned home, I had it done and since then she is free from that trouble.

K: It is just because of this past incident His Holiness asked you about your mother. What is wrong with it?

Doctor: I do not say that there is anything wrong in the remark by itself. From the very question whether my business has been finished, it is quite apparent that His Holiness is aware of *the nature of the business* which has brought me here. This can be inferred also from the fact that He has not till now asked me why I have come here. The real import of his question is this. "Your mother had abdominal trouble. Though you were a doctor, you could not cure her. You took from me Vibhuti for her. Now you have come here to treat me. Is it not so?"

* * * *

On another occasion a doctor who was much devoted to His Holiness learning that He was mostly sleepless during the nights dissolved a pill in the milk intended for His Holiness; and that night His Holiness slept soundly. On waking up, His Holiness thought over the matter for a while

and sent for the doctor and the doctor had to admit what he had done and prayed for pardon as he did it only out of love. His Holiness said. "Is not the normal oblivion quite enough? Is it necessary to have it in a larger measure? Please don't do like this any more."

Another doctor, learning that His Holiness was not taking food properly, mixed some medicine in His Holiness' milk. The next day His Holiness felt somewhat hungry, sent for the doctor and learnt what had happened. His Holiness said to him also

"When I am trying to overcome hunger, you are giving me medicine to make me more hungry. Don't do it hereafter."

Thus His Holiness did not allow any doctor to interfere with Him. Though His body might be thinner, it was never unhealthy. The daily ablutions and Puja were not for Him. Even the bath and the taking of food were not regular. The servants would place in His room some food at noon without disturbing Him. If He chanced to wake up to the world, He might take a little out of it; otherwise it would be there untouched. The servants would come again in the evening to take away the vessels and return in the night with a cup of milk; it might happen that this also remained

untouched till the next morning. In this way many a day passed away without His taking any kind of food, solid or liquid. While in this state, sleep also was unknown to Him. The want of food and sleep, the two essential requisites for the upkeep of the physical body, would make it appear emaciated but the brilliancy of His ever beaming face would have been greatly augmented.

Sri Kamalananda Narasimha Bharati Swamigal of Nelamavu Mutt who studied Vedanta under His Holiness for two or three years before and was touring far away from Sringeri at this time heard about this strange condition of His Holiness and came post haste to Sringeri to see Him. He went to the other side of the river Tunga and found that the residence of His Holiness was locked and that a servant was sitting there as guard. He expressed his wish to see His Holiness. As during that state His Holiness was very scantily dressed and very often even without a loin cloth, nobody was allowed inside. In deference however to this Swamiji, the servant said. "I shall just open a window shutter. You may peep in and have a glimpse of His Holiness" and opened a shutter slightly. The Swamiji peeped in and saw His Holiness emaciated in body, without shave and without any cloth. It was only a few weeks before

that he had sat at the feet of His Holiness, and was listening to His glorious exposition of the Bhashyas. The contrast between that state and the present state was so staggering that he could not contain himself and tears began to gush out of his eyes in streams. He prostrated to His Holiness from outside the window and stood up with folded hands and was pleasantly surprised to see His Holiness standing on the inner side of the window. He again made a prostration with tearful eyes. His Holiness said "Come again at four o'clock in the evening". Realising that this was a great unexpected blessing, the Swamiji returned to his quarters. As directed by His Holiness he came again to the mutt at about four o'clock and found to his great surprise that all the doors and windows were open. He went inside escorted by the servant. He saw His Holiness there on His usual seat and wearing as ever before the cloth, Vibhuti, Rudraksha and so on just as He used to be when expounding the Bhashyas. The Swamiji was unable to decide whether this was a dream or whether the vision he had in the morning was a dream. He made his prostration and at the direction of His Holiness sat down near Him.

H. H: You came this morning?

Swamiji: Yes.

H. H: I heard that you were now touring far away from here.

Swamiji: Yes. I was.

H. H: The occasion for your coming here now ?

Swamiji: I heard that Your Holiness' Sarira (body) was not Svastha (in its self-alright) and felt I must come immediately to pay my respects to Your Holiness.

H. H: Is that so ? I am no doubt glad that you have come but you need not have interrupted your tour merely for this purpose. You say that the body was not svastha (seated in the self). The body is never the self nor can it be seated in the self. By its very nature it is outside the self. So there is nothing strange in its not being in the self. It "not being in the self" is its nature itself. How can it deviate from its own nature ? Further the body is signified by the two words "Sarira" and "Deha". The word "Sarira" is derived from a verbal root which means "to waste away"; a sarira therefore cannot escape its characteristic of being wasted. The word "Deha" comes from a verbal root which means "to increase." From the moment of birth the tissues

and limbs of the body will grow by becoming larger, stouter and harder. During this state of growth the body bears the name of Deha; the same body when it has ceased to grow and has begun to decline gets the name of Sarira. Evidently this outer encasement has passed the stage of being Deha and has entered on the stage of being Sarira. It follows its inherent nature in doing so in accordance with past Karma and therefore there is nothing to be anxious about. Nothing is the matter with me. You need not be anxious at all but may continue your tour unconcernedly.

Thereupon the Swamiji took leave of His Holiness. Immediately His Holiness returned to His previous state.

CHAPTER III

SOUTH INDIAN TOUR.

His Holiness continued in that state of abstraction, obliviousness to the world or abnormality, as we may choose to call it, for a period of nearly six months. Then he returned to normal life. His Highness the Maharaja of Mysore thought that, as His Holiness had continuously stayed at Sringeri itself for more than ten years since His accession, a tour might be a desirable change for His Holiness and was also long overdue in the view of the disciples outside Sringeri and so requested His Holiness to visit Mysore and bless him and all the disciples there. His Holiness accordingly started from Sringeri on the 18th of January 1924 and after several halts and blessing the disciples on the way ultimately reached Mysore. His Highness and the people there gave Him a hearty and grand reception and rendered their devoted services to Him.

At the desire of His Holiness, the house in the old agraharam in Mysore where His illustrious predecessor was born and also some extensive space adjoining it were, thanks to the kindness of His Highness and the good services of Sri Kunigal Rama Sastri and Srikantha Sastri,

acquired for the mutt and a magnificent stone structure raised thereon containing a shrine for a beautiful marble image of His Holiness the previous Acharya. During His stay at Mysore His Holiness had the supreme pleasure of consecrating this new shrine.

The disciples in the Coimbatore District just south of the Mysore State requested His Holiness to visit that District also and this was followed by the earnest representations of the disciples in the Districts further south and His Holiness was pleased to agree to extend His tour as far south as the Cape Comorin. His Holiness descended the Mysore plateau and His visit to Satyamangalam was His first contact with the Tamil Districts. His mother-tongue was Telugu; and Kannada was the language of the land of His birth. He had however picked up some knowledge of Tamil from contact with the Tamilian disciples who frequently visited Sringeri. Knowing this, the disciples at Satyamangalam requested His Holiness to give them some words of advice and to the great surprise of all including those most intimate with Him, He began to give discourses in such chaste and fluent Tamil as would evoke the admiration of any born Tamilian. Since then throughout the Tamil Districts. His discourses were all in Tamil

except in special gatherings of Pandits which He addressed in His own characteristic style of very simple and expressive Sanskrit so natural to Him. He stayed at Gobichettipalayam for the Vyasa Puja and Chaturmasyam and celebrated that year's Navaratri Festival at Erode. At the ardent desire of the disciples in those parts, He visited several places on the banks of the Kaveri and the Amravati and in the Districts of Coimbatore, Tiruchirapalli, Ramanathapuram and Madura. Passing through the Chettinad where the Nattukottai Chettis were famous for their devotion and munificence, His Holiness went to Rameswaram after the Chaturmasyam at Kunnakkudi. After a dip in the sacred waters of the Setu and worshipping in the famous shrine at Rameswaram, His Holiness came to Madura where also He was given a magnificent reception. Leisurely passing through the several villages in the Madura and Tirunelveli Districts, He stayed for that year's Chaturmasyam at Papanasam high up on the banks of the Tamraparni. Then He toured the Tirunelveli District, visited Kanya Kumari, had a fitting reception by the Maharaja of Travancore and others at Trivandram the capital of that state and finally proceeded to Kaladi the birth place of Sri Sankara Bagavatpadaoharya, His predecessor had after great

difficulty and with the hearty help of the then Maharaja of Travancore, acquired an extensive plot of land there and built thereon Temples for Sri Sankaracharya and Sri Sarada in 1910. It was the desire of His Holiness to improve it still further so as to make it a centre of vedic culture. At His instance a Veda Pathasala had been started already and during His visit there He personally inaugurated a Vedanta Pathasala also for advanced students in Vedanta. The students in both the Pathasalas had their boarding and lodging free at the cost of the mutt itself. His Holiness directed also the building of a substantial Pathasala and also the formation of a Brahmana agraharam street there for the residence of the teachers, temple employees etc. From Kaladi His Holiness passed through Tiruchur, Palaghat and Coimbatore to Nanjangud in the Mysore State for the Chaturmasyam in 1927. At the end of that year He returned to Sringeri. The magnificent and devoted reception that greeted Him at every step during the entire tour of four years and the divine blessings which He showered on all those who came in contact with Him are still green in the memory of all.

Many have been the incalculable benefits derived by those who had the good fortune to come

in contact with Him; it is not possible to catalogue them; it will be invidious also to make any reference to any particular place or person as having been blessed by Him for His love was quite catholic and universal and included all in its range. The high and the low, the rich and the poor, the learned and the ignorant, the Hindu and the Christian, the Mahomedan and the sceptic, all received the same kind of treatment from Him and all of them returned from His presence the wiser and the better for the few minutes of contact which they were fortunate enough to have with Him. He made even the humblest of men realise that he had a sincere friend and guide in His Holiness. The richest of men and those highly placed in worldly life keenly realised their own littleness before the spiritual wealth of His Holiness. In the field of erudition, He showed Himself head and shoulders above all scholars in the several branches of learning and commanded their admiration and reverence and even the most learned of them felt humble before this mine of learning. He was an adept in the Mantra Sastras and in the Agamas as well and many have been the suggestions and rectifications made by Him in the field of individual worship or in the Temples which He visited. Many have been the incidents in which He playfully

showed His yogic and super-normal powers without the least detriment to His Tapas. It is not possible to record here the innumerable interesting and instructive incidents that happened during his tour or on other occasions. I propose therefore to confine myself in the sequel to a few incidents which are likely to interest the ordinary reader.

It may be stated here that, during all those four years of this busy tour, His Holiness never became *Antarmukha* or retired into Himself oblivious of the external world. When He had come out on tour with the specific object of blessing the devotees, how could that object be achieved if He chose to retire into Himself? The devotees would be of various grades of qualifications, temperaments and natures and every one must be guided, taught and helped according to their particular grades. His Holiness must necessarily descend to their respective levels if they were really to profit by contact with Him. His Holiness accordingly mixed with the world freely and made every one feel at home with Him. He knew that the ordinary run of mankind could not understand or appreciate His own supra-normal experiences and so bore no resentment against those who tried to "cure" him. In this context an interesting incident that happened at Mysore may be stated.

One day it was arranged to take His Holiness in a grand procession with all royal splendour. The state elephants, cavalry and infantry, the bands and other paraphernalia of the state and the mutt went in front of the beautiful flower-decked palanquin in which His Holiness was seated. The Maharaja himself, the Dewan and the high dignitaries of the state and the elite of the city walked alongside His Holiness. Sets of Vaidika Brahmanas chanting the Vedas and innumerable Bhajana parties kept up the rear. The whole procession covered half a mile or so and was a very grand and inspiring sight. When the procession with all its dazzling splendour had however proceeded only a short distance from the start, it began to drizzle and it was thought advisable to stay the procession for a short while to avoid His Holiness, His Highness and others getting drenched. The procession was accordingly halted in front of a nearby palatial building. In the spacious front verandah a seat was provided for His Holiness. The Maharaja and all other prominent persons sat around His Holiness. Then His Holiness casually asked "What is this building?" An official there said "It is His Highness the Maharaja's Government Hospital". His Holiness smiled and said "Some people have been tryin

for some time past to bring me here. Evidently this is the day destined for that". This remark made the persons who had tried before to treat Him as a patient hang their heads down.

He was never elated by the respect or honours shown to Him nor depressed by any deficiency in them. He was quite indifferent to and unaffected by the world and its doings but was witnessing them all, including His own passage through life, as an interesting exhibition of the wonderful and manifold play of Maya the Divine Power of God. It was not as if He was callous or blind to them; He realised their existence in the work-a-day world and at the same time their unsubstantiality, and so had no reason to worry himself about them or to bestow any serious thought over them.

When His Holiness was to be taken in procession in the golden palanquin, it was usual to deck Him with a crown of precious stones on His head and a costly embroidered laced silk cloth over the Kashaya cloth He was wearing. One day the servant in charge of this placed the laced cloth on Him but with the lace work inside, the threads showing out. The procession took place with the usual grandeur and enthusiasm. After it returned to the residence of His Holiness and when the

mutt-servants busy removing the articles in His Holiness' residence and learnt from them that His Holiness was moving to the northern bank. I immediately went to His quarters with the intention of paying my respects to Him before He left for the other bank.

R. K.: I learn that Your Holiness is going to the other bank.

H. H.: Yes. It is said that rains are likely tonight. If there are rains, there will be floods in the river. If there are floods, it will be inconvenient to bring the Puja articles here from the store on the other bank. So they said we might move to the other side even now. As it does not matter where I am, I did not object and so assented. Most of the articles have been removed to the other bank and I must also start shortly.

I did not know what to say.

H. H.: Simply because I am going there, you need not come there. You may stay where you are. *There will be no rains or floods to-night.*

I thought for a second that He could have given this assurance to the official who suggested the shifting. I realised immediately that the answer was already in His Holiness' words "it does not matter where I am". If He had said to Him that there would be no rains, would it not imply a preference in His Holiness' mind to stay where He was? Further, when the official did not ask His Holiness whether there would be any rain but assumed the possibility of its raining that night and suggested the shifting to His Holiness, it was certainly not necessary for Him to contradict the official and so He did not think it necessary to object. It will be seen from this simple incident how detached He was and how He contented Himself with being a disinterested witness to all that happened. Such an attitude of colourless indifference is very difficult to maintain in these days but His Holiness demonstrated by His life that it was not an impossible state.

CHAPTER IV

INTUITIVE PERCEPTION.

His intuitive perception of things and memory were quite phenomenal and at times seemed uncanny.

1. A gentleman saw His Holiness for the first time and prostrated before Him. His Holiness asked "Subrahmanya?". "Yes", replied the gentleman. An onlooker would take it to mean that the name of the gentleman was Subrahmanya and that His Holiness knew him before. It was not so. Subrahmanya was his Upasya Devata, special deity. Is the reading of the deity attributable to any "learning" of His Holiness?

2. A friend of mine turned up just when His Holiness was distributing Tirtha Prasadam to a large and expectant crowd and wanted me to introduce him to His Holiness. I told him "This is not the proper time. Mix with the crowd and get the Tirtham now. We shall meet His Holiness at leisure at four in the evening". He was disappointed at my answer but took my advice, mixed with the crowd and in his turn extended his palm to receive the Tirtham.

His Holiness asked him "Andhra?". "Yes", said my friend. "From the village of S — ?" pursued His Holiness. "Yes" said my friend again. "Lawyer?" was the further question of His Holiness. "Yes" was again my friend's reply. "We shall meet at four" was the parting word of His Holiness.

The friend returned to me immediately and with some trepidation asked me, "Is the fact that I am an Andhra and that an Andhra from the village of S—written on my forehead?" I replied, "It must be so as His Holiness has read it". I may mention that at that time His Holiness had not visited S—village yet. Is such reading the result of any book-learning or any feat of intelligence?

3. One evening His Holiness came away to His quarters on the northern bank of the river Tunga at Sringeri directing me to stay on in a room given to me on the southern side. Next morning I took my bath in the river as usual, finished my ablutions, went round the Adhishthanam of the late Acharya and prostrated before it. Then I came away to the northern bank to pay my respects to His Holiness. As soon as I prostrated at His feet, He observed "The other bank will have been very quiet and peaceful as we also have come away to this side". To assent to

this observation would imply that His Holiness' presence would have disturbed that peace and quiet. I did not therefore say anything but kept silent. His Holiness went on to say "No, I do not mean that way" [as if I had given an answer] and with a smile added "I only meant to say that, as there was nobody there to hear, you might have recited the Dakshinamurti Stotra aloud when you prostrated at the shrine of the Acharya". I was naturally taken aback. How did His Holiness know that I prostrated before the Acharya? It might be a guess as in the usual course I might be expected to do it. But how did His Holiness know that I recited Dakshinamurti Stotra while prostrating and that within myself?

4. When I asked him once for initiation in the Bhagavad Gita Bhashya, He asked "You had your Siva Panchakshari from our previous Acharya?". With some surprise, I said "Yes". "That was at Tiruchendur, was it not?" was the further surprising question to which also I answered in the affirmative. "On the day of His Holiness bathing in the sea?" pursued His Holiness. Quite astounded, I said "Yes". The upadesa by the previous Acharya was fourteen years before the date of this conversation and about three years before His Holiness was called to the Holy Seat —

5. A gentleman who was at Sringeri desired to go to Madras on some urgent business and sought His Holiness' permission. "Why?" asked His Holiness. "I have some urgent business at Madras" was the gentleman's answer. His Holiness hesitated just for a second and then said "Yes, you may go. There is certainly some urgency but not at Madras". The gentleman left for Madras but on the way when the train was stopping at the Arkonam Junction he got down and accidentally slipped between the train and the platform. Thanks to the prompt help of the people nearby, he was taken out immediately without any injury. He at once realised the significance of His Holiness' words. He continued his journey to Madras in a reflective mood and returned to Sringeri immediately without attending to any business at Madras. When he paid his respects to His Holiness, he was met by these kind words of His Holiness "I hope you were not much inconvenienced on *that* morning".

6. An orthodox Brahmana gentleman once brought with him his Puja casket with a view to give it to His Holiness and receive it back with His blessings. His Holiness took it and opened it, and scanned the several images therein. Then He picked out a Salagrama stone (where it is believed

some aspect or other of Maha Vishnu is immanent) and exclaimed "Why, the Lord here has been starved for seven years!"

The disciple was taken aback at this accusation and said "So far as I remember, I have not been remiss in my worship to justify such a charge. If I have unconsciously erred, I am certainly prepared to abide by Your Holiness' directions."

His Holiness replied "I am sorry but you have not performed the worship properly. The deity immanent here requires daily Kshira Abhishekam (bathing in milk) and Payasa Nivedanam (offering of milk food) and I note that these have not been done for the past seven years."

The disciple then said "I now recollect that when my father was alive he used to give the bathing and offering mentioned by Your Holiness. As I had begun my own Puja even during his life time, I added his Puja to mine soon after he died and worshipped all the deities together without making any distinction and they all had the same kind of bathing and offering."

His Holiness said "Evidently it is now seven years since your father died?"

"Yes" replied the disciple.

"You did wrong in putting all the deities together and treating them all alike" pointed out His Holiness. "This Murti requires special worship and Naivedyam. Please offer them hereafter as I have mentioned."

This incident may seem strange if not fantastic or false to those who cannot understand the value of image worship but it is full of meaning and instruction to those who believe in the immanence of God in all things in the universe, the immanence being more apparent in some things than in others to the eyes of the Seer.

7. Once when His Holiness was dispensing holy water to the disciples assembled, a young woman who had brought her daughter with her suddenly missed a gold chain put on the neck of the latter and was creating some slight disturbance. Her friends hushed her up and asked her to coolly receive the holy water from His Holiness and then go home to give vent to her grief. She accordingly came before His Holiness and spread out her right palm to receive the holy water but His Holiness signed to her to step aside. This increased her grief and she did not know what to do. His Holiness continued to give holy water to several others and when an old woman spread out

her hand to receive it, His Holiness said in a very low tone "Give it up."

"What?" cried the woman.

"What was taken" was the cool reply of His Holiness.

"I have not taken anything" she persisted.

"Don't add to your sins" was the admonition of His Holiness. As soon as this was said, the ladies who were standing near her caught her up and recovered the chain from the folds of her sari and placed it before His Holiness. He then called the other woman before him, gave her the holy water and said "Take the chain but don't do hereafter what you are asked not to do."

She replied in penitent tones "I have learnt the lesson. I shall obey. I shall obey."

Later it transpired that her husband was a clerk in some office and had wanted his wife to serve his breakfast before going to His Holiness' camp for attending the Puja and that for fear of losing the Puja she hastened the preparation of the meals and asked her husband to serve his breakfast himself and came away to attend the Puja. His Holiness evidently pointed out by this

incident that true piety was incompatible with a breach of duty.

8. On one occasion a gentleman, a stranger not only to the place but to His Holiness as well, prostrated before him and said "By some strange good fortune I had some business in this town and I have been enabled thereby to pay my respects to Your Holiness. I deem myself very fortunate."

His Holiness was much impressed by his frankness and said "I am sure God will grant your wishes."

The gentleman replied "May I take bold to request Your Holiness to favour me with some Upadesa (sacred teaching) which I can treasure?"

His Holiness immediately looked up and a wave of displeasure passed over his face. He asked the gentleman in somewhat severe tones "Have you heard of the Vedic passage, *Revere your mother as a God?*"

He answered "Yes, certainly."

His Holiness continued "Have you heard of the further Vedic passage, *Revere your father as a God?*"

"Yes, I have" replied the disciple.

His Holiness again went on "Have you heard of the still later passage, **Revere your Guru as a God?**"

"I have", he said.

"If you have," said His Holiness, "obey the first two injunctions before you come to me. Go!"

This severity hurt the man very sharply and with a trembling frame he fell down before His Holiness and with streaming eyes cried out "I have been trying my best to serve my parents but they are not kind to me."

His Holiness said "The injunctions are for *you* and are *not* conditional on *their* being kind to you. You must do your duty whether they are kind or not. You will find in the end that you have won their love. Will you bear this in mind?"

"Certainly. And I shall so conduct myself as to justify my approaching you for further guidance."

I leave the reader to surmise as best as he can and find out how His Holiness pitched upon this particular teaching as the one most fitted and necessary for this gentleman.

9. A gentleman who had retired from service and was leading a fairly pious life went to Sringeri with the idea of getting the gracious permission of His Holiness for taking Sannyasa so that he might spend the rest of his life solely in spiritual pursuits. He mentioned to His Holiness that he had educated all his sons and had all his daughters suitably married and could therefore take Sannyasa without any inconvenience to anybody. His Holiness looked up at him and said, "But you seem to have yet strong filial feeling. You must get over it in time and then think of Sannyasa." The gentleman bowed his head and submitted to the verdict of His Holiness. It appears that even when he was seeking the permission of His Holiness an almost unconscious undercurrent of thought that his youngest son though educated was still unmarried and not yet provided with a job was running in his mind. His Holiness read it easily.

10. A boy who was serving as a volunteer during the visit of His Holiness the previous Acharya to a town on his way to the Kumbhabhishekam at Kaladi was then too young to approach Him for any initiation but had been imbued with great respect and devotion and ever looked up to Him as a Divine Ideal. About fifteen years after the

passing away of His Holiness from mortal vision, he seems to have keenly felt that he had lost an opportunity of having an initiation from Him though he was in constant attendance upon Him. One night he had a glorious dream in which His Holiness appeared before him and graciously initiated him into a mantra. His joy and gratitude knew no bounds. But when he woke up and tried to recollect the dream, he could not in spite of his earnest efforts recall to his mind the exact Mantra that was given to him in the dream. This unfortunate forgetfulness grieved him a great deal. As I happened to be a friend of his, he told me about this. I suggested to him that as His Holiness Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati Swaminah was camping only a few miles off he might meet Him and obtain His blessings in person as an appropriate substitute for the blessings got from His Predecessor in the dream. He accordingly went to His Holiness and detailed to him His dream experience. His Holiness very sympathetically listened and then directed the young man to come again the next morning. When he so went the next morning, His Holiness called him inside His room and gave him an initiation. In the course of the initiation he realised with a pleasant shock that the Mantra that he was now receiving from His

Holiness was identical with the one which he got in the dream and could not recollect. He was convinced that, though the embodiments of the two Acharyas were different, they were really identical in spirit. There have been many other instances where this identity was patently perceivable. It will have been noted that His Holiness came to the seat only after His Predecessor had passed away and had no opportunities of knowing what all happened during the several tours of the latter to various parts of the country or even during His stay at Sringeri itself with reference to the innumerable persons who would have visited Him. His Holiness however would sometimes recount graphically very many incidents connected with the previous Acharyas as if He were an eye witness to them. Even if we are not prepared to grant the identity of spirit between them, we must certainly grant that He had the power of intuition to vividly look into the past and into the future and beyond the ordinary ken of others.

11. His Holiness was once requested by the disciples in a particular village in the Tirunelveli District to visit the Siva temple in their village and particularly requested Him to have the visit before sunset. His Holiness agreed and as the village was somewhat distant from His camp He went there

have no fear". It was then that the villagers said. "There had been a rumour that a Brahma-Rakshas spirit was in the temple from a long time past and that is why we requested Your Holiness to come before sunset so that there might not be any trouble by it. We now see that thanks to Your Holiness' blessings it has left the temple and has run away down the street. It has struck down an unfortunate man who happened to come in its way." *His Holiness repeated the assurance* that they need not fear any more, blessed the villagers and returned to His camp. It will be noted that His Holiness did not say that He had the mantrakshata brought only for that purpose nor that He drove away the spirit. Therein lay His genuine greatness.

12. In another small village there was a temple wherein Siva was facing the east and Ambika the south. Late one night His Holiness was taken there. After worshipping the Lord, He entered the enclosure in front of the Goddess and did not go into the Garbhagriha but remarked "There is some obstruction to vision." The people there thought that the light there was not sufficient and went near the lamps. His Holiness said "Not to me. To the Goddess." They could not grasp His meaning and blankly looked up at Him. He

explained "It is usual to have a hole even in the external wall of the temple just in the path of the Goddess' vision. Is there no such opening in this temple or has it been blocked?" It transpired that there was such an opening but had been filled up by mud by children playing nearby. He had the obstruction immediately removed and then worshipped the Goddess.

13. A rich and ardent devotee of His Holiness once went to Sringeri with his wife and children in his own car and stayed there for a few days and then sought the permission of His Holiness to return home.

D: I think of starting from here to-morrow. May I?

H. H.: To-morrow? What is the urgency?

D.: I have received an urgent call from my place to attend to some important affairs there.

H. H. (after a moment's reflection). Your going from here seems to be imperative but not required by any business at home.

D.: My business is in my village itself.

H. H.: Anyhow you may start. Everything will end well. Don't be anxious.

He started the next day with all the members of his family and when his car was nearing Mysore it dashed against a tree and crashed. All of them were injured except a baby which miraculously escaped any injury. They had to be in-patients in the Mysore Hospital for some weeks before they could return home. They felt keenly that but for the blessings of His Holiness the accident would have been more serious and fatal.

CHAPTER V

POWER OF MANTRAS.

The Lord in His Gita V, 29 calls Himself the Friend of all beings and a Seer is equally so. As God in His infinite mercy is pleased to listen to our silliest prayers and grants to us what we sincerely pray for, His Holiness never declined to help an earnest devotee if His help was sought in ever so insignificant or absurd a manner. The Lord has stated in the Gita VII, 16 that four kinds of people resort to Him, the afflicted, the desireful, the seekers of knowledge and the knower. As the afflicted and the desireful are necessarily the majority in any society, His Holiness sharing as He did the characteristics of the Lord had to deal mostly with them. As the number of possible afflictions and desires is infinite, His Holiness who was asked to deal with them had necessarily to be omniscient. But He in His humility did not assume any such knowledge in Himself but passed the prayers on to the Lord who is certainly omniscient and knows how to deal with the varied contingencies. His Holiness' intense faith in the limitless power and mercy of God never flagged and the Vibhuti, Kunkumam or Mantra given by Him was potent enough to cure all

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ailments, physical and mental. Innumerable are the instances in which reliefs of various sorts have been obtained by His gracious blessings.

1. A gentleman had a daughter who had been given in marriage, was nearly twenty years of age but had not yet attained puberty. Her husband's people despaired of the girl coming to their home and proposed to get him another wife. The girl's father was naturally very much upset, especially as he was very poor and had more daughters to marry. He gave vent to his grief before His Holiness. His Holiness listened to him patiently and then taking a small quantity of butter sanctified it by some Mantra and gave it to the father for being given to the girl that night. It was accordingly done. Early next morning, the girl attained puberty!

2. A gentleman whose niece was having repeated abortions approached His Holiness when she was again pregnant and His Holiness was pleased to give some consecrated Vibhuti with the warning. "Ask the girl to use it daily without fail and to safeguard it well". She was using it for some weeks but, unfortunately for her, her mother-in-law took it into her head one night that the uncle had secured a charm to give his niece

control over her husband and, in a fit of rage, took out the Vibhuti from the Puja room and threw it into the dustbin. That night the poor girl had such a violent abortion that her life was despaired of. When His Holiness was informed of this, He assured the uncle that the girl would be alright thereafter; and she is so, without any more abortions and with a number of healthy children.

3. A young man in the twenties was closeted with His Holiness for more than half an hour. When he came out, it was noticed that he could by no means be called orthodox as he did not even dress himself properly and this naturally evoked the curiosity of others to find out what could have taken him to His Holiness. It appeared that this young man married a girl when he was just twenty, quarrelled with her the next year and drove her off to her parents' house, married another girl in his twenty-second year, quarrelled with her also in a year and drove her also to her parents' house. He became desperate and felt that he was quite incompetent to lead a householder's life. He thought of suicide but his faith in his religion made him shrink from it. He thought of taking Sannyasa, but felt that he was more incompetent for it. He did not know what to do and had almost decided to run away to some unknown place when he

chanced to hear of His Holiness as a universal friend who would not only be sympathetic but had the power to give the necessary relief to the afflicted. He sought an interview with His Holiness and placed all his woes before Him and sought His guidance. His Holiness listened very sympathetically and finally gave him a Mantra which he was asked to repeat so many times a day for a period of ninety days and directed him to come to Him after that period. This visit was in pursuance of that direction. It appeared that a week before the expiry of that period the father of the first wife took her to the house of the young man in the early hours of the morning and coolly left her on the pial of the house and returned home asking his daughter to make peace somehow with her husband. The poor girl was all in trepidation and did not know what to do. At about five in the morning the young man opened the door of his house and came out and was surprised to see a young girl there and was more surprised when he found that it was the first wife whom he drove away. Though he was really glad of her returning without any harm to his own prestige and self-respect, he asked her in somewhat severe tones "How did you come here?" With tears in her eyes she mentioned what her father had done. He said

“Don't cry. Go in”. It need hardly be said that in a few minutes the reconciliation was complete. A few days after this incident, the father of the second wife heard about it and adopted the very same procedure with the obvious result that the husband had to take her also in. His old dilemma as to what to do returned to him in a different form and he sought His Holiness' advice once again now. There can be no doubt that the advice given by Him was conducive to the happiness of all the persons concerned.

4. Another gentleman was a clerk in a mofussil District Munsif's Court. He was very honest and straightforward and very punctilious in the discharge of his duties but was unnecessarily free with his tongue. If any superior officer gave him any directions, he would not content himself with carrying them out but must needs add a Sanskrit quotation “Whatever is sensible must be accepted even though it comes from a parrot or a child.” This would necessarily offend and irritate the higher official. The result was that he very often found himself in difficulties and on one occasion he was actually suspended from service. His Holiness was touring nearby. The gentleman's wife said to her husband “I hear that His Holiness is relieving many people of their

troubles, physical or otherwise. Why not you also go to Him and seek His blessings?"

He replied "What can His Holiness do for me? Saturn rules over my tongue and nobody can change my nature at this time of my life."

She said "If anybody can help you, it is certainly His Holiness. I think it will be well if you go to Him."

Persuaded by her importunities, he did approach His Holiness and detailed his circumstances and quite frankly added "So long as Saturn rules over my tongue, I do not know if Your Holiness can do anything for me. But my wife thinks otherwise. Hence my coming to you. I shall be fortunate if your Holiness can possibly do anything for me."

His Holiness smiled at this strange request and asked him to go to Him the next morning. He then gave a Mantra to him and asked him to repeat it so many times a day and to come to Him again a fortnight later. A week after this the District Judge inspected the District Munsif's Court and was very much impressed with the clearness

and regularity of a particular register and desired to know who the clerk concerned was. He was surprised to hear that he was under suspension under his own orders passed on the report of the District Munsif. He concluded that it was really the latter that was unable to properly appreciate the clerk. He cancelled the suspension order and transferred the clerk to his own establishment at his headquarters on a higher status. The clerk joined his new duties and, as by that time the fortnight fixed by His Holiness had expired, he went to His Holiness and mentioned to him with all gratefulness what had transpired in the meanwhile.

He asked "Now that I have got my appointment, I suppose I can give up repeating the Mantra."

His Holiness smilingly said "You have to be repeating the Mantra as long as Saturn is ruling over your tongue."

I may add that the clerk had no further difficulties in the course of his service and honourably retired a few years later.

Those who do not believe in the efficacy of Mantras may explain the above incidents as due

to mere chance, that is, give an explanation which is no explanation. According to the Hindus, Mantras are potent living forces capable of affecting us and those around us; but they are such forces only when they emanate from a spiritual fountain-head. Otherwise they are mere words or sounds. Mantras are like electric bulbs; they can shed light only when in proper contact with a battery behind. It is no surprise therefore that in these days of cheap printing the sacred Mantras can be learnt by anybody but they are quite useless unless they are communicated to competent persons by some living source of spiritual power. It is not the fault of the bulb if it does not burn when it is not connected with a battery.

While recalling the above incidents, I quite realise that they bear no proportion to and form really no indicia of the true greatness of His Holiness.

As already stated, His Holiness would never take any credit for any spiritual powers. If any benefit accrued to any disciple through Him, He would ascribe it to the grace of His Guru or to the efficacy of the Mantra itself. It was His evident object to infuse into those that approached Him intense faith in that grace and in that

efficacy. Sometimes He would ask the devotee himself to repeat a particular Mantra and realise its efficacy himself. If he once realised it, he would easily believe in the efficacy of other Mantras and turn out to be an ardent believer in the Vedas and the Sastras.

When His Holiness was camping at Papanasam in the Tirunelveli District for Chaturmasyam, a disciple who was attending the Puja one night in the midst of a large crowd missed a gold chain which his child was wearing. After the Puja and when His Holiness was about to retire, he with great sorrow mentioned it to His Holiness and was directed to go to Him at eight o'clock on the next morning. When he went and prostrated before His Holiness, the latter asked him to sit near him and initiated him into a Mantra and said "Sit in front of your present quarters and repeat this Mantra 1008 times. Exactly when you are repeating it for the 1008th time, if you see a man going along the street in front of you, follow him immediately wherever and how far so ever he may go. Don't hesitate to do so. Your object will be fulfilled". The disciple punctiliously followed His Holiness' directions and when he was repeating the mantra the 1008th time he found a man going along the street and

immediately followed him. That man left the outskirts of the village and began to walk along the ridges of the paddy fields. He went on like this for more than a mile. Then he got down in a field and seemed to bow down and take out something from the field. The pursuer immediately recognised his chain and caught hold of him. The latter shocked at this unexpected interruption, threw the article down, freed himself from the grip and ran away. The disciple glad to have recovered his chain returned, prostrated before His Holiness and gave expression to his gratitude. It is curious that the thief did not turn back even once to notice that he was being pursued; we have to take it that the mantra was powerful enough to make him oblivious of what he himself was doing and made him walk to the place quite involuntarily. It is well known that in case of snake-bites some mantrikas make the very snake that bit come again to suck the poison out. Evidently this mantra was of a similar nature and made the thief himself pick out the stolen article. But it must be remembered the mantra will have such power only when handled or communicated by a rich reservoir of spiritual power like His Holiness. It will be quite useless if it is looked upon as a mere jumble of sounds which can be learnt from any printed book. The growing

disbelief in the efficacy of mantras and Vedic rites in general is generally due to the handling of them by those who are not qualified by the Sastras to do so. Such handling not only fails to yield the desired benefit but becomes positively harmful also. Ordinary people tend to throw the blame on the rites instead of realising the defect in the incompetent handler and to come to the conclusion that the rites are all useless and entail unnecessary waste of money, material and energy which can be more "usefully" diverted for the benefit of humanity. Those who have had the good fortune to come into contact with His Holiness and have had the opportunity to witness and watch the several rites which were performed under His auspices or in accordance with His directions can never for a moment doubt their efficacy, much less doubt the truth of the sacred scriptures that prescribe them.

To show that the dictates of fate are inescapable, though by the grace of God they can be alleviated to some extent, a few more instances may be cited.

A gentleman who was the eldest member of his family was childless though his brothers had children of their own. When His Holiness happened to be invited to his house, his relations

function the boy had a fit. The father was naturally very much grieved and reported it to His Holiness. His Holiness said. "It does not matter. He will be alright tomorrow morning." When he returned to his quarters and found that the boy had recovered in the meantime, his joy knew no bounds. But in an hour's time the fit came on again and he ran to His Holiness who said again. "It does not matter. He will be alright in the morning." He had to be satisfied with this answer but found the fit coming on every half hour and even every ten minutes, he did not think it proper to approach His Holiness as he consoled himself with the thought that fate was irremediable and that its dictates must be submitted to and that even His Holiness was powerless against it. During that night the boy had the attack at least twenty times. The sight was unbearable but what could one do? Then at about four in the morning the boy laid himself down and slept soundly till sunrise. There was a special brightness and briskness in his face when he got up. He insisted upon bathing in the river and accompanied his father to His Holiness. His Holiness said. "There will be no more trouble" and blessed him. The fits left the boy for good. It is clear from this incident that when His Holiness said that fate was very strong He meant

that in certain cases it could not be absolutely overcome but that by appropriate rites the suffering that would have to be endured in the course of a long period might be advanced and suffered in a single day itself thereby exhausting its full force in acute experience.

A similar case may also be cited. An ardent devotee was suffering from diabetes and having carbuncles now and then. When he sought relief from His Holiness, special homas were arranged in the mutt itself under His directions. At the time of the final oblation *Purnahuti* His Holiness Himself was pleased to be present and after the oblation was over He went round the fire and then with folded hands said "It is said that there will be a shower of rain in token of God accepting this oblation". This was in the hot month of April. As soon as His Holiness said so, there arose the sound of thunder and thick clouds gathered from all directions and in a minute's time there was a very heavy downpour of rain, so much so that a mud ridge had to be put up to prevent the rain water flowing into the altar of fire. His Holiness Himself had to stay there sometime awaiting the rain to cease to enable Him to return to His quarters. In the case of this gentleman also he had a very serious carbuncle within a few days of this function but became completely free from

diabetis thereafter. It is seen from this also that though some sins may be completely expiated by adequate rites there are many whose effects can not be annihilated altogether though they may be regulated or alleviated if the prescribed remedial rites are properly carried out.

A gentleman had a grown up daughter who could not speak distinctly, performed the rites prescribed by His Holiness and had the satisfaction of his daughter speaking well enough. His Holiness gave the prescription with reference to the ancient treatise called Karma Vipaka. The possible reasons given there for this kind of infirmity were very interesting. "If a person had been a very learned scholar but had declined to impart his knowledge to a deserving disciple who asked for it, that person in his next birth will have his intellect and powers of learning intact but not his power of speech. Suppose some children are playing near a well and one of them slips into it. Normally the other children shocked at this incident will run to their elders and inform them about it. It may happen that one of those children, knowing full well that he must inform the elders, deliberately desists from doing so and prevents the others also from doing so, out of the apprehension that he himself may be charged with the crime of pushing the other child into the well,

though he has the power of speech and there is an urgent occasion for using it, he keeps quiet thereby denying to that child the chance of being saved. He may be well denied any power of speech in his next birth. There may be similar such reasons. The deliberate non-use of the power of speech when occasion calls for it will result in this infirmity. The same principle holds good to the other faculties also."

Another devotee had a married daughter who declined to go to her husband's house as she felt a kind of very un-pleasant trepidation whenever she went there. Her father and also her father-in-law tried all sorts of treatment, medical and mantric, but to no effect. The son-in-law in these circumstances took to himself another wife. This grieved the girl's father a great deal. Sometime later, he went to Sringeri along with his daughter and mentioned to His Holiness his plight. A few days later His Holiness asked her to repeat a stanza after Him and then said "This must be repeated daily so many times. It must also be written on a Bhurja leaf and worn as a protection. Within ninety days there is sure to be benefit." When the father and daughter went to His Holiness the next day to take leave of Him, His Holiness asked "Do you know what a Bhurja leaf is?" The father said "I do not know. But there

is an Ayurveda doctor in my village. I thought of asking him" His Holiness said "You need not take that trouble. I have myself written the stanza in a Bhurja leaf. Take this. Put it in a gold or silver tube and ask your daughter to wear it; such tubes will be available locally itself". They returned deeming themselves specially blessed. Within a few days after she began to wear it, she herself began to say that she wanted to go to her husband. At about the same time her mother-in-law who was having high fever gave out "What a sin have I committed in making my son marry again? What shall I do to expiate it? The first wife must be brought here anyhow" Thanks to the intercession of some mutual friends, the girl was taken to her husband's house and was treated with all affection by him and his parents and also by the second wife and led a happy life and was soon after blessed with a son.

CHAPTER VI

METHOD OF TEACHING.

His method of teaching was unique. Many have been the instances of ardent disciples going to Him for having their doubts cleared and returning from Him with their doubts completely solved, without the need to even formulate those doubts. In His presence, somehow or other, each individual's doubts and intended questions got automatically answered. At times a single word from Him was able to dispel many a doubt that had troubled the disciple for a long time. If the disciple felt on the other hand any difficulty in construing any passage in a particular book, His Holiness would ask him to read it aloud, and, before the passage had been read out, the disciple would himself realise that its meaning was now clear to him. At other times His Holiness would read the passage aloud Himself and ask the disciple whether he now understood it. The disciple would have to admit that he did. His Holiness would sometimes add some significant gesture or read the passage with a significant emphasis and these would be ordinarily sufficient to convey the meaning to the disciple without any need for any verbal explanation.

He did not care for finishing a book in any particular period of time. If he took up any book for exposition, it might take years to complete it, for He set more value on intensive study than on superficial learning extending over a wide field. He realised that the ancient teachers had condensed the teachings of all the Vedas put together in a few pregnant sentences or a few pithy stanzas and very often even in a single stanza or half of it. If one could grasp, understand and realise, in its fullest significance, the truths embodied in any such passage, that would be quite enough to help him to salvation. It is quite unnecessary to read books, all and sundry.

He used to say "If you have any doubts about the truth, or if you want to support it by your intellectual skill or learned lore, by all means study the several books. But if you have no doubt about the truth and only want to realise it in actual experience, all that trouble is unnecessary. If a cook wants to serve a tasty dish to another, he has to know what thing and how much of each thing go into its composition and how they have to be prepared and mixed and in what proportion and so on. The person who is only asked to relish it need not have that knowledge. So leave the dialectics of our philosophy to the learned among us for they have to prepare the dish for others.

You may confine yourself to the practical enjoyment of the peace and joy of the Self. It is now ordinarily thought that for a modern Advaiti it is indispensable that he must study the commentaries of our great master Sri Sankaracharya. He was certainly a Seer. Did he become one after studying his own commentaries? Even if we are prepared to say that he became one only after writing them and cogitating over the thoughts contained therein, what about his predecessors Govinda-pada, Gouda-pada, Saka and Vyasa himself? Did they study the commentaries of Sankara to become Seers? This clearly shows that a study of these commentaries is not indispensable for a genuine aspirant for self-realisation. Further we are seeing every day very many persons who are very proficient in their exposition of these commentaries and other allied literature. Can we say with any truth that they are in any way nearer to self-realisation than others? Catch hold of a single truth enunciated by the Vedas and stressed by our ancients and try hard to make it your own. God will certainly reward your honest efforts and guide you aright."

His Holiness did not like abstract discussions even in the field of Dharma. He usually declined to answer any hypothetical question raising the propriety of a particular course of conduct. If

however any disciple earnestly approached Him for guidance in any particular and His Holiness felt satisfied that the disciple would act according to His directions, then and then only would He give him His advice; and that advice would be only for that disciple. If another person thinking that he had similar qualification or that his circumstances were similar asked His Holiness whether he also might not act by the same advice, he would very often receive a negative answer and would receive a different kind of advice with a note of warning that the disciples ought not to compare notes. It would eventually be found that the difference in the advices given was quite justified. His Holiness thus believed only in individual guidance and not in collective or mass guidance.

He did not belittle the value of or discourage religious propaganda but believed in the possibility of achieving individual and national welfare only by concentrated and well-directed individual effort in conformity with the Sastras and had no faith in the so-called mass movements which ignored either the individual or the Sastras. A single example is far more valuable than a hundred precepts.

Consequently He did not like the idea of the public preaching of religion for He felt that a public lecture really helped nobody, neither the

speaker nor the listener. He felt that it was futile to talk and discuss about the nature of Brahman when people were not able to give up even falsehood or did not care to perform even their daily religious duties properly. He once asked a Pandit "I suppose you are expounding the Bhashyas as usual" The Pandit replied "Yes, with Your Holiness' blessing." He was confounded by the next immediate question of His Holiness, namely "I suppose you are performing regularly your daily Oupasana (oblations in the sacrificial fire)?" The Pandit said "I am sorry I am not able to do it," and foolishly trying to excuse himself added, "As I am living in a big town, it is not possible for me to get proper cow-dung (for preparing cakes to preserve the fire in)." His Holiness with some severity said "The cows in your town evidently give only milk for your coffee and no cow-dung for your Oupasana!"

Though His Holiness was an adept in the intricacies of Hindu logic and philosophy and was a very good dialectician Himself, He did not like that anybody should engage himself in any wordy fight merely for the sake of the pleasure of it. Once when a gentleman had taken the trouble to write out a detailed answer to the objections raised by the head of a Madhva Mutt to the doctrine of Advaita, His Holiness asked him, "Has our

Acharya anywhere laid down that such as these are any means to a realisation of the goal of life? Why have you wasted your time and energy in this endeavour? It is really a work of hatred and bound to provoke more hatred. While our Acharya has asked us to give up Raga (passion) and Dvesha (hatred) completely, you are trying to give them a place even in the field of religion. I do not wish to be troubled with such works."

His Holiness would say "Why should people quarrel about the nature of the Absolute Being? If we are content to believe that the Being has a form, we are at present far far away even from His feet; and the path to attain those feet is yet to be trodden by us all. When we are at the end of that path and if, by the grace of that Being, we are enabled to have a vision of His glorious face, it will be time enough then to look Him in the face and ascertain whether He is wearing on His forehead holy ashes or the trident mark or anything at all and whether He can be called Siva, Narayana, or by any other name. Why should we wrangle over it now? What does it matter to us in the stage in which we are at present situated whether the highest truth is absolute non-dualism, qualified non-dualism or dualism? The path of Dharma is broad enough for all of us to travel along; each according to the Dharma prescribed

for him; when we have advanced far enough in this long and arduous road and are on the threshold of the final goal, it will be time enough to consider the true nature of the Absolute Being."

His advice was therefore usually confined to such simple admonitions as *Remember God, Perform your daily ablutions, Do not hanker after riches, Be content, Preserve an attitude of detachment* and so on.

"It may seem strange to you when I ask you to remember God. You occupy high positions in life and are learned in our sacred lore. Is it not improper on my part to ask you to remember God? It will certainly be improper if I ask you to do so when you are feeling the presence of God. Does not the existence of so many courts in your town, of so many documents to evidence transactions, of so many offices to register those documents, and in fact every other dealing of yours, proclaim not only that you do not remember God but have completely forgotten His existence? This may seem a very elementary teaching but people require it the most now."

"If you honestly believe in the Law of Karma and honestly believe that pain and pleasure are both the results of antecedent Karma, and if you do actually get one of them, namely, pain,

without the least attempt or intention on your part to get it, why do you long for and work for the other, pleasure, alone? Will it not come of its own accord if you have merited it by your past karma and will it ever come to you in spite of your most earnest efforts now, if you have not merited it already? Why do you waste your time and energy in this futile endeavour? Spend them in accumulating the store of virtue to enable you to lead a higher and better life in other regions or in future births or, better still, spend them in trying to eliminate birth altogether, for if you happen to take birth again I feel sure that you will not find then even the few facilities which you now have for spiritual uplift."

I may mention in this context that His Holiness was averse to any broadcasting of His spiritual teachings as if they were the common property of all who chanced to come across them. It is difficult therefore to give an abstract of His teachings except what can be culled from His casual conversations or from His very rare public utterances.

In the field of genuine devotional poetry, His compositions are innumerable but only a very few have found publication through the exertions of some ardent disciples. It is an open secret that

His predecessor began a commentary on Sri Sankaracharya's famous work "Viveka Chudamani" and that His Holiness continued it and yet the manuscript was not handed over by Him to anybody. His own feeling was that it was a book for the guidance of qualified, earnest aspirants and not to be broadcast to all and sundry.

Though it is thus practically impossible to get at His highest teachings except through the gateway of earnest discipleship, a glimpse of the same can be had even from a casual conversation with Him. To converse with Him or to listen to a conversation between Him and another was itself a great pleasure and a valuable lesson. His method of enunciating almost playfully the highest truths of our religion from the simplest observed facts or from simple axiomatic first principles was not only inimitable but a genuine delight to listen to. For some samples of His method, the reader is referred to the books "Dialogues with the Guru," "The Call of the Jagadguru (Sringeri)," etc. The following is an illustrative sample.

"If a man is suffering from acute poverty, is it of the slightest use to him to know that another man who is quite unconnected with him is rolling in wealth? On the other hand, such

man, the latter does derive some pleasure from saying that so-and-so is related to him. If the former is on the other hand deeply attached to the latter, the latter's pleasure will necessarily be more acute. From these observed phenomena we may draw a lesson that if a miserable man wants consolation he must get into the habit of looking upon all happy people as related to himself as his own. Further as a God who is seated somewhere at an unapproachable distance has no intimate relationship with us but is enjoying unlimited bliss can be of no practical use to us, it is certainly wiser to conceive of Him as being ever with us wherever we may be, ever loving us and ever prepared to help us. It is as such an affectionate Friend that the Sastras define God.

“The relationship between God and ourselves may be conceived of in various ways. Suppose a poor boy wants to enter into relationship with a rich land-lord of his village. The first step is to enter into the service of that land-lord, honestly and efficiently carry out the duties entrusted to him and generally earn the good graces of the master. If he thus behaves and gives satisfaction to the master, the latter will like him and provide for all his comforts; he will give him any special sweetmeats prepared for himself, will provide him

with proper clothing according to his needs, will send his own doctor to treat the boy if he happens to be unwell and will generally look to all his needs and requirements. If however he feels that the boy is not really attached to him but is serving him only for the salary that is paid him, he will not extend his help in any way but will be strict in exacting work from him.

“If it happens that the rich man has no children of his own and thinks of adopting a boy, his first thought will turn towards the boy who has been so honestly and disinterestedly serving him all these years and giving him great satisfaction and has successfully endeared himself to him and he may decide upon adopting this boy himself. If he does so, the boy becomes affiliated to the family; he is no longer a servant but has become a son. Any work that he may do thereafter is no longer the “master’s work” but is his own. It will not be necessary for him to take orders from the master for everything that he may have to do; he will take the initiative himself and act in the interests of the family which now includes himself. If the land-lord notes that the young man is interestedly and efficiently conducting the family concerns, he will gradually relieve himself of their control and allow the young man himself a free

hand in the management. It may happen also that even if the land-lord wants to carry out some work he will seek the advice and help of his son. If anybody else chooses to ask him about any family matter, he will be directed to the son for an answer. In course of time it may be rumoured about that the big man is now "obedient" to the son. Even then the title deeds for the properties and the entries in the Government registers will continue to be in the name of the land-lord himself.

"A stage may come when his love for the young man and the young man's love for him are so intense that each of them forgets that the other has any interest of his own. When such a stage is reached, the big man will be glad to divest himself even of the formal title and bestow it upon the son himself, preferring to remain unconcerned with any family affair and to enjoy the peace of rest. At that stage the young man himself becomes the land-lord.

"Thus we may trace three stages, first when the boy is a stranger but is prepared to work as an obedient servant, second when by adoption he becomes intimately related to the land-lord and third when he himself becomes the land-lord. The Sastras want us to maintain relationship to God in

similar stages. We must first look upon Him as our master, abide by His commands and sincerely serve Him without any expectation of reward; this is known as the path of Karma or Action. If we get into intimate contact with Him, earn His divine love and become, as it were, a limb of His, we are on the Path of Bhakti, or Devotion. If we lose all sense of distinction and realise our oneness with Him, we have traversed the Path of Jnana or Knowledge."

way solved the problem as regards the secular part of the Mutt administration; Brahmasri Srikantha Sastri who had served the Mutt as agent for over forty years with characteristic zeal and untrivalled ability and deep devotion thought it opportune to retire from service.

His Holiness felt that He was more free now to retire into Himself. He of course evinced great personal and even paternal interest in the daily education and training of the young Swami and very often taught him Himself. But in course of time even these activities became less and less and His Holiness liked to be quite alone when He did not engage himself in the Puja or in the exposition of the Vedanta literature. Gradually the Puja and the expositions themselves ceased to engage Him and He found ineffable peace only in solitude and in introspective vision. His ceasing to take any interest in the Mutt affairs practically resulted in leading them to a chaos and the Junior Swami, by reason of his being quite young and engaged in his studies, could not be expected to take charge of them. The Government of His Highness the Maharaja of Mysore therefore came to the rescue by taking over the management of the Mutt into their own hands for the time being. His Holiness ceased to take interest in conversing

with people and even when a large number of disciples were waiting for His Darsana, He would very often not come out at all and, if He did, He would greet them with a significant nod to some and an expressive monosyllable to some others and a bewitching smile to the rest and pass out of their view.

It is impossible to understand or to characterise aright the nature of the experience that His Holiness was having when He retired from communion with the world. Many have been the honest attempts of several devotees to "cure" Him and many a doctor who pronounced Him "incurable" have been sorely disappointed at His becoming quite normal very soon after their verdict. It may also be mentioned that during His abnormal moods His experience seemed to have a wider range and transcend space. I shall mention just one or two simple incidents.

(1) There were two brothers *A* and *B*. *B* the younger was suffering from high fever and *A* the elder brother wired to His Holiness for blessings for the speedy recovery of his brother. The Mutt official who received the telegram murmured within himself "As if His Holiness would care for such things! He has forgotten the world itself."

Some hours later when he went to see how His Holiness was, he took with him this telegram so that he might inform Him if there was any opportunity. As soon as he went in, His Holiness asked "What is there in your hand?"

The official replied, "*B* has sent a telegram that his elder brother *A* is having high fever."

His Holiness said "You mean that *A* has wired to say that his younger brother *B* is ill."

The official looked up the telegram and found that His Holiness was correct and immediately said "I am sorry. I forgot to remember the thing properly."

His Holiness smilingly said "I can afford to forget the world but *you* ought not to."

The official naturally felt that his own unspoken words were being thrown back at him.

(2) The residence of His Holiness at Sringeri is ordinarily on the southern bank of the River Tunga away from the main Mutt buildings and the busy town of Sringeri which are on the northern bank. The Mutt officials reside in the Brahmin Street which is about half a mile from the usual residence of His Holiness. During one of the abnormal periods, His Holiness once after

midnight called His attendant and asked him to run up to the other bank and to the Brahmin Street and to help a particular official who had fallen down. The attendant stepped aside without any intention of obeying His Holiness as he thought that this sudden command at the dead of night must be due to some dream or hallucination. A few seconds later, His Holiness asked from His room "Have you gone?" The attendant for fear of incurring His displeasure and reluctant to utter a false-hood refrained from giving any response and slowly slipped away and did come to that official's house. He found it bolted inside and quite quiet and thought his suspicions confirmed. But he did not like to face His Holiness' possible question as to whether he saw the official. So he tapped at the door and the official himself opened it and was taken aback to find His Holiness' attendant there at that time of night and naturally became anxious about His Holiness and asked him what the matter was. The attendant told him what happened.

Then the official said "Some minutes back I stepped into the street for passing urine and when I had washed my feet and was about to enter my house my foot slipped on the stone step and I fell down. I lost consciousness for a minute or

two, then I came to myself and quietly returned to my bed without anybody in the street or in my house knowing anything about this incident. I do not know how His Holiness saw it. Anyhow I am extremely thankful for His kindness. Please inform Him that I am now quite alright."

When recounting this incident to me, the official added. "The moment I pronounced the last sentence I realised my folly. If His Holiness saw my falling down, will He not have seen also my getting up alright? It was only my foolishness that made me ask the attendant to inform His Holiness about it."

In 1938 a stay at Bangalore for some time was proposed by some intimate devotees but His Holiness declined to undertake any tour with the usual paraphernalia.

He accordingly started on quite an informal tour and proceeded to Bangalore. He stayed there for some months but it was impossible to secure him the solitude that He preferred. In the course of the Kaladi tour His Holiness the previous Acharya had consecrated in 1907 a fine temple for Sri Sankaracharya on the right hand side in front of the Sankara Mutt at Bangalore and this visit of the present Acharya was utilised for

erecting a similar fine temple for Sri Sarada on the left hand side facing the other temple and symmetrical with it.

From Bangalore His Holiness went via Coimbatore to Kaladi and stayed there for about ten months. This gave the South Indian disciples an opportunity to pay their respects again to His Holiness nearer home. The Government of His Highness the Maharaja of Travancore made extensive arrangements for the convenient stay of His Holiness at Kaladi. But the disciples flocked to him as during His previous tour and sought His help, not as a spiritual teacher but as a healer of their physical, mental or domestic troubles.

Early in 1940 His Holiness decided upon returning to Sringeri. He was glad to be back again at Sringeri especially as the Junior Swami was very anxiously awaiting His return. His native element was solitude and silence and He could not have these outside Sringeri.

By temperament and training, His Holiness was averse to all ostentation and idle talk and He generally did not like to give audience to persons who went to Him only out of motives of curiosity. But to those who were sincere in their longing to attain the true knowledge that could break asunder

all bondage and desired to be shown the way, He was ever accessible; He was not only their master and teacher but was their loving friend and guide.

But it must be said that it is very regrettable that the number of persons who sought His help for spiritual salvation was practically nil. Those who have no ailments to get rid of but still visit Sringeri go there mostly for sight-seeing. It is not surprising therefore that His Holiness did not relish the idea of being included among the items of sight seeing. Naturally to one of such a temperament, idle conversation is mere waste of precious life. Once after much difficulty I was fortunate enough to get His permission to meet Him one evening. In the course of conversation, I found occasion to say. "Many a disciple coming to Sringeri return disappointed for want of opportunities to hear a word of blessing or of encouragement or of advice from Your Holiness' lips. They will be greatly benefitted if Your Holiness can be more accessible."

His Holiness: "You are mistaken. Those who seek to converse with me are mostly interested in matters in which I have no interest. And they have no interest in matters in which I have interest. What purpose is served by granting interviews to them?"

K: "It may be so. But there are still some people who genuinely seek guidance from Your Holiness."

His Holiness: "Seek help from me! Why, they want my help as a Doctor and as a Mantrika. Is it for this that this great institution was founded by the great Acharya?"

K: "There are a few persons who long to approach Your Holiness for spiritual guidance but are to their great regret denied that opportunity."

His Holiness: "If they really and sincerely long for my guidance, they will in spite of my seeming inaccessibility force themselves upon me," and with His characteristic smile He added "Just as you have done."

I took this both as a hint and as a hit and did not deem it proper to pursue the subject further. His Holiness' standpoint was so different from the ordinary layman's that it was really profane to seek to disturb Him.

On another occasion, I happened to enter the room where His Holiness was seated quite alone. After a slight gesture asking me to sit down, His Holiness relapsed into silence and continued in it for about twenty minutes. The

peace and exaltation that I felt and enjoyed during that period can never be adequately expressed. I thought I noticed a smile flickering on the face of His Holiness and looked up. His Holiness asked "Shall I tell you?" I naturally replied "If Your Holiness so pleases." Then His Holiness said "I was in perfect peace when a thought disturbed it. I realised that you were sitting near me and perhaps expected me to speak. This led me to the further thought that, if I had to meet your expectations, I must speak. I recollected immediately that 'to speak' was a verb requiring an object. I thought therefore I must find an object as otherwise there could be no speech. Then I recollected that all objects in the universe came under either of two categories, the True and the False. The True is Brahman and the False is the world of form. Either of these two things must therefore be spoken of. But the Vedanta has declared in unmistakable terms that Brahman the True is beyond all speech and even all thought. So Brahman as an object of speech was out of the question. There was thus only the world to be talked about. But regarding the world, the Vedanta was equally emphatic that it was *Anirvachaniya* or incapable of being explained in words. So the world also seemed to

be out of the question as a fit object of speech. There was no third entity available. There was therefore no fit object of speech. For want of an object, there could be no speech. When I came to this conclusion, I realised that I had come back only to wherefrom I started and that I need not have allowed these thoughts to disturb me. The example of the cartman who drove his cart through the bye-paths to avoid the toll-gate but found himself at break of dawn just in front of it suggested itself to me. Evidently I smiled at myself for all this waste of thought and you looked up."

Having said this much, He relapsed into silence. This was far more of a lesson to me in practical Vedanta than anything I could learn from the books. I realised keenly that I might have quite unconsciously entertained a passing thought that His Holiness was silent and a vague hope that He would break the silence. I realised at the same time that I was the unconscious cause of bringing His Holiness to the level of the ordinary world. I immediately rose up and took leave of His Holiness. When His Holiness is revelling in a higher sphere, is it not profanity to make Him care for us if only as a matter of etiquette?

It is not always that we realise that our devotion to our Guru requires that we should not disturb Him or drag Him down to our level. His noble presence is itself quite sufficient to radiate happiness and peace around Him without any need for Him to open His lips and give us any spoken blessings or advice.

Well has the Lord said of the Seer, "What is night to all beings, there the Seer is awake; where the beings are awake, that is night for the seeing Sage" (Gita II, 69). It is therefore meaningless to judge of His Holiness by any of our ordinary standards. His personality baffled all attempts at classification for He stood in a distinct class by Himself. Judged by the normal standard of ordinary worldly life, He might have seemed at times quite abnormal, if not eccentric or even mad. Sri Hastamalakacharya was to all appearances a dunce till the Great Master put him the question "Who are you?" Even long after he was accepted as a disciple, his co-disciples did not realise his worth. The Master pointed out to them "If Hastamalaka would only write a gloss on my commentary on the Brahma Sutras it would certainly be a brilliant production. But it will be difficult to bring him down from his plane of Atmic realisation to that of authorship" thereby suggesting that the disciple

H. H: "You may answer my question on the supposition that he does."

G: "He must certainly be mad; otherwise how can he see such a sight? It exists only in his imagination."

H. H: "He is considered mad simply because of the fact that others fail to see what he himself sees?"

G: "It is not so. He is considered mad as he sees something which does not exist."

H. H: "Something which does not exist in the view of the other nine?"

G: "No. Something which does not exist at all."

H. H.: "But it does exist for him."

G: "But it is due only to his madness."

H. H: "That is, he is considered mad because he happens to see something which nine of his friends have decided from their own experience does not exist."

G: "Certainly."

→ H. H: That means, that his madness or
, otherwise is not determined with reference to

his own experience but with regard to the opinion of the majority who do not have that experience."

G: "It is something like it."

H. H: "Suppose then that by the vote of the majority it has been decided that the thing seen by him does not, as a matter of fact, exist; can this prevent him from seeing it, at least after the moment of that decision?"

G: "How can it? He will continue to see it as before."

H. H: "Then, what is the value of the vote? It is neither based on the experience of the seer nor is it effective to dispel that experience. Madness therefore seems to be only a relative conception based on the experience of those who have not the particular experience which the so-called mad man has"

The gentleman did not think it necessary any longer to ask His Holiness the question which he came to ask. He had been more than answered without any need for his asking.

When the Lord Himself came down on earth as Sri Krishna, it was only a very few who recognised His greatness. The majority of people

ignored Him. A few went to the length of scoffing at Him. It cannot be expected therefore that all and sundry would flock to His Holiness and seek release from the bondage of phenomenal life.

CHAPTER VIII

IDEAL SEER

The dictum of the Lord that even a knower should punctiliously engage himself in action if only to guide others properly (Gita III-26) was so faithfully observed by His Holiness whenever the phenomenal world received His attention that He might well be characterised as an uncompromising ritualist or bigotted idolater.

A gentleman from Bengal who had heard of His greatness and self-realisation came to Sringeri and was astonished, and perhaps disappointed, at seeing His Holiness rigidly engaged in His ablutions in the morning and in the worship of the Divine Mother in Sri Chakra Yantra later in the day. He evidently expected His Holiness to be ever in deep Samadhi and oblivious of the world. He did not want to doubt His greatness, but found it difficult to reconcile his own conception of a seer as revelling in the contemplation of the Formless Absolute of the Upanishads with what he actually saw before him, namely, ritualistic exactitude and devoted worship of images. He wanted to have a solution and found occasion to mention his difficulty to His Holiness Himself. He asked in a

general way "If a person has Atmic realisation as propounded in the Vedanta, can he properly engage himself in rituals or in image worship?" His Holiness asked in answer. "What else do you expect him to do?" If the gentleman had answered this question by suggesting any other alternative, even that alternative would have been equally inconsistent with the state of self-realisation. He perceived therefore that by this simple question of His Holiness he himself was placed in a dilemma and he sought to get over it by saying "I do not mean to say that he should do anything else. My difficulty arises this way. Doing anything, be it rituals, or image worship, or even study of the scriptures, implies the sense of doership. Self-realisation implies a sense of non-doership. Are not these two attitudes inconsistent with each other and, if so, how can they exist at the same time in the same individual?"

His Holiness: "Quite true. Two things which are mutually contradictory cannot exist at the same time in the same entity. Now will you tell me, who the non-doer is?"

G: "Of course the self."

H. B: "Quite right. You have studied our system well. Will you tell me who the doer is?"

G: "Certainly it is the body, the senses, the mind and the intellect."

H H: "Quite right again. The self is the non-doer and the doer is the non-self. Is it not so?"

G: "Yes"

H. H: "Where is the inconsistency now? The doership and the non-doership do not inhere in the same entity".

The gentleman felt this solution to be so-telling and at the same time so simple that he realised the absurdity of his doubts and parted from His Holiness more devoted than before.

When His Holiness was in the habit of expounding Sri Sankaracharya's Bhashyas, He was one morning deeply engaged in Sri Chakra Pooja oblivious of the disciples who were waiting for the Vedanta class and they had to go away disappointed. I was there at the time watching the pooja, noticed their departure and happened to think within myself; "How can His Holiness find pleasure in mechanically throwing flowers on an image and how can that pleasure, if any, be even a fraction of the ineffable joy and exaltation which one can have in expounding the beautiful passages

in the Bhashyas?" After the Pooja was over, His Holiness came out, gave prasadam to me and said "मिथ्याजगदधिष्ठाना (The substratum on which the illusive universe seems) is one of the names of the Divine Mother. Do the Bhashyas contain anything more than this?" and smilingly passed on.

His Holiness evidently pointed out that the intellectual reasoning in the Bhashyas was really only theoretical and must lead to the realisation of the self only through the practical course of devotion and contemplation. If every word in the Lalita Sahasranama, nay, any name of God, is given its fullest significance at the time of worship, is any other course of training towards self-realisation necessary at all? To His Holiness, the Pooja was *not* mechanical but was itself a divine experience yielding bliss beyond compare.

When His Holiness started one forenoon for worship in the Sri Sarada Temple at Sringeri and went near the southern entrance, a cow was found squatting just below the lowest step leading to the doorway. As the temple could not be entered that way without disturbing the cow, the servants went near it to drive it away. His Holiness however signed to them to keep quiet and Himself went in front of the cow and sat down on the ground

and signalled to the servants to place near Him all the Pooja materials which they had brought for the worship of Sri Sarada. He began Go-Pooja in right earnest and used up all the materials in the worship of that cow. After Deeparadhana, the cow stood upon its legs of its own accord; His Holiness went round it in pradakshina and stood before it with folded hands; the cow looked up at Him; and slowly passed on as if giving Him leave to enter the temple. His Holiness must have felt that He had no justification for passing by a living representative of the Divine Mother in the cow, while seeking to enter the Divine Presence in the temple.

On another occasion when His Holiness was performing Abhisheka to Sri Chandramouliswara Linga in the Mutt, some other disciples and myself were seated at a distance and looking on. Suddenly a big King Cobra began to crawl in and we stood up in consternation. His Holiness observed the commotion and its cause and signalled us to sit down. Strange to say, we did so immediately without the slightest sense of fear. The Cobra came on and on and finally reared its head into the room in which His Holiness was seated and moved into it. We again got afraid but His Holiness coolly took a small cup, filled it with milk and extended his hand with the cup of milk in it so as

to bring it just beneath its shining tongues. This increased our apprehension but we were too dumb-founded to do or say anything. The serpent leisurely licked up the milk in the cup held by His Holiness, raised its head high, had a good look at Sri Chāndramouliswara, turned towards His Holiness as if to take leave of Him and then went away as it came. Well does the Lord characterise the Seer as one who has no fear of anything in the world and of whom none in the world is afraid (Gita XII, 15).

When thus even animals behaved towards Him, it is certainly no matter for surprise that all men equally loved and revered Him, the most orthodox and the most apostate, the prince and the peasant, the learned and the ignorant, the young and the old, for from the height of His realisation all these distinctions ceased to have any value for Him and His vision peered into and grasped the Divine Essence in all. The reader will have seen from the incidents recorded heretofore that His Holiness' vision covered also the past, the present and the future as well as things beyond the flesh. His greatness was such that it was transcendental and impersonal.

After His return to Sringeri from Kaladi in 1940, His moods of abnormality increased both in

frequency and in duration and it was only very rarely that the disciples had the opportunity of seeing Him and paying their respects to Him in person. It may have seemed a misfortune to the ordinary people that the Head of such a great Mutt as Sringeri was not accessible to them for advising them or guiding them in matters worldly and spiritual but, if the object of the great Master Sri Sankaracharya in founding this seat was to show to the world that the Advaita ideal was not beyond possibility of realisation even in this age, that object was more than fulfilled by this occupant of the seat being what He was. The ordinary world failing to understand the great cannot in any way detract from their greatness.

His Holiness at times was quite normal and moved in the world as did His illustrious predecessors without detriment to His self-realisation. At other times He retired into Himself but continued to radiate spirituality throughout the world by His very silence as did many an ancient Sage in this land of Saints? Fortunate and happy are those who have benefited by His silent but very potent influence. God grant us the faith necessary to enable us to profit by the existence of such souls in this world! It is well for us that in this age of restless activity we had

amidst us one who stood out as a striking example of the ideal Advaiti described in the Sastras and served as a beacon-light to guide the steps of earnest aspirants for the bliss of the self.

If anybody in the modern world could be called a seer, that is, one who had realised in actual experience the Vedantic truth of the basic identity of the Individual Soul with the Universal Self, it was certainly His Holiness Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati Swaminah and it was only in the fitness of things that He occupied the spiritual throne founded by the Great Master Sri Sankaracharya, the Apostle of Advaita.

CHAPTER IX

MY CONTACT WITH SRINGERI

It was in the middle of 1916 that I had the privilege of paying my respects to His Holiness for the first time. The occasion was the Kumbhabhisheka of the renovated Sri Sarada Temple and of the shrine erected over the Samadhi of his illustrious predecessor Sri Sachchidananda Siva Abhinava Narasimha Bharati Swaminah who had attained Videha Mukti four years before. A batch of over a hundred devotees from the Tirunelveli District went there led by Rao Bahadur A. Sundara Sastri the then Government Pleader and Public Prosecutor at Tirunelveli and other leading citizens including my late revered father G. Ramachandra Aiyar. As soon as we reached Sringeri, Sri Sundara Sastri went into the office room of the mutt Sarvadhikari Sri Srikantha Sastri and informed him that we had all come from Tirunelveli not merely for Darsana but for active service in that great function and that they might be allotted suitable duties. Sri Srikantha Sastri at once replied "Now that you have come, I feel relieved as if you are my own people from my native home. I knew that you were coming. It is not for me to dictate any duties to you. I have

issued general instructions to all the servants to abide by the orders of the volunteers from Tirunelveli. It is for each of you to take charge of any department which may seem congenial to him and conduct the festival as you think best. If there is any deficiency in the arrangements hitherto made, you have only to report it to me and I shall see it is immediately remedied. That alone is my responsibility". This statement made us all feel instinctively that we were not any strangers in a strange and unfamiliar place but were one with the Mutt. This feeling infused interest and responsibility in one and all and made them serve the Mutt with re-doubled vigour and enthusiasm. It is not my purpose to detail here the magnificent arrangements that had been made for the reception of His Highness the Maharaja of Mysore and the princely representatives of the several states in India, of the innumerable pandits from various parts of this vast sacred land or of the several thousands of devotees who flocked there from far and near to witness this unique function. Much less is it within my competence to describe the grand and imposing Homas, chanting of the Vedas, the gathering of Pandits discussing the several Sastras, the grand processions or the actual Kumbhabhisheka itself. I shall however mention a few interesting incidents.

To accord a fitting reception to the Maharaja of Mysore at the entrance to the town of Sringeri, a large concourse of people had gathered. On one side of the road, orthodox Brahmanas dressed in dhoti and shawls with Purnakumbham in their hands were awaiting the arrival of His Highness. Just opposite to them were arranged the high officials of the State and of the Mutt with their upper cloths tied around their waists though they were dressed in coats and turbans. Other people were behind these two rows. When the car of the Maharaja approached this place, it was stopped and His Highness immediately got down and turned towards the orthodox Brahmana set and bowed to them with folded hands, and with great humility accepted the Purnakumbha and received on his head the akshata with their blessings. After this was over, the Maharaja turned to the side of the officials who all bowed to him with folded hands and accepted their homage. This made a very deep impression on most of us who immediately realised the great respect which our Hindu rulers had towards Brahmanas who had kept up their traditional mode of life in contrast to those who had preferred to enter the official walk of life. The Sarvadhikari Srikantha Sastri, though he was a fairly learned man and was strictly orthodox in

his habits, had to stand in the officials' group as he was, besides being the agent of the Mutt, the then Municipal Chairman of Sringeri and had also the status of an Assistant Commissioner for revenue purposes. His younger brother Sri Kunigal Rama Sastri who held no such secular function was accorded a prominent place among the Vaidikas who blessed the Maharaja unlike his own elder brother who had to bow to His Highness.

The batch of volunteers from the Tirunelveli District desired to have an interview with His Highness but as his programme had been already tightly fixed up neither his Private Secretary nor the agent of the Mutt could arrange for such an interview. But as their desire to have one, though only for a few minutes, was intense, they consulted my father about it. My father made them stand in two rows on either side of the foot-path at the time of the Maharaja's returning from Darsana at the Adhithana shrine on the southern bank of the river Tunga. When His Highness noticed Brahmanas with Vibhuti shining on their foreheads and badges on their arms arrayed on either side of the path, he felt impelled to ask the Mutt official accompanying him who these were. The official had perforce to mention that they were volunteers from the Tirunelveli District

for service during the festival and to introduce also the Captain and Vice-captain of the batch to His Highness who immediately commended their noble services in a few words of kind appreciation. The volunteers had thus their wish for an interview fulfilled much to the astonishment of those who pronounced it to be not feasible.

, As I was then but an "appendage" to my father and a young man quite in the rear of the party and as the occasion was a busy and crowded one, I had no opportunity of coming into close contact with His Holiness but was quite content to see Him from a distance and witness the several functions that were taking place. I can never forget the impression He made upon me when He seated in His silver throne presided over the magnificent Durbār in front of Sri Sarada and addressed the distinguished audience, in such simple and chaste Sanskrit as even I myself could understand, on the greatness of Sri Sankara, the divine mercy of Sri Sarada and the unique spiritual responsibility of the Mutt and incidentally appealed for the active and devoted co-operation of the disciples to enable Him to carry out that responsibility effectively in consonance with the aim of Sri Sankara in founding this sacred institution.

My father had been for a long time entertaining an ardent desire to retire from secular life and take to holy orders but owing to various causes it had been delayed or obstructed. In 1921 however it became very intense and he decided upon taking Sannyasa immediately. But thanks to the kind intercession of some of his intimate friends, it was possible to persuade him to go to Sringeri and abide by the decision of His Holiness. He accordingly went there and placed himself entirely at the disposal of His Holiness. He was given a room near the residence of His Holiness on the southern bank of the river where he can quietly perform his ablutions and Puja, carry on his studies and take rest. He was asked to take his meals in the Mutt itself. His Holiness gave for his reading all the available literature detailing the qualifications, the duties and the responsibilities of a true Sannyasa life so that he might acquaint himself fully with the implications of that Asrama. He also attended the daily classes wherein His Holiness was expounding the Gita. His Holiness evidently meant that he should have a period of probation and preparation before he took holy orders. That is, he must not have the idea that Sannyasa was an easy thing and he must be made to realise its heavy responsibilities. Ho

also deeply realised the usefulness of this preliminary training. He was kind enough to write to me

“The more I study and learn under the feet of His Holiness here the more confirmed becomes my view on the question of entering into the Sannyasa life. My gratitude to Mr. A. K. Sundaram Aiyar and yourself for having made me come *here* has no bounds in fact”.

When I met him later on also, he told me that, when he listened to the exposition of the Gita by His Holiness, he realised that his own understanding of that sacred book was very imperfect and that he had to unlearn and abandon many a concept which he had entertained before.

While he was thus staying there, I went to Sringeri. As I had taken with me a servant to cook for me and as that servant was well known to my father, I requested him to have his meals with me but he declined to do so saying that he would mess in the Mutt itself as usual. It grieved me a little to see this attitude of his as I felt that in as much as he had not yet taken holy orders there was nothing wrong in his dining with me but this was not a matter on which I could argue with him or about which I could complain to anybody. Soon after my arrival there, my father and

myself proceeded to the presence of His Holiness and prostrated before Him. After some preliminary enquiries about my welfare and journey, His Holiness turned to my father and said "Now that Krishnan has come, you must have your meals along with him". This definite order surprised both myself and my father. My father replied "It is not necessary, I shall have my meals as usual in the Mutt itself". His Holiness smiled and said "It was proper for the Mutt to feed you in his absence. Now that he has come, the Mutt will not feed you". My father somewhat reluctantly accepted this verdict and dined with me throughout the period of my stay there.

One evening His Holiness was pleased to tell me

"I have given your father the relevant literature dealing with the duties of a Sannyasi so that he may fully acquaint himself with them. If, even after a careful study of the same, he is confident of his own ability to discharge those duties properly, I have no alternative but to give him my consent"

R. K: I do not doubt at all his confidence. But his family is a big one; there are other children who have to be educated and provided for with

jobs and have to get married. When there is such a great responsibility still to be carried out by him, will it be proper for him to leave the family in the lurch and take to Sannyasa? This doubt is troubling me.

H. H: Who is responsible for his leaving his family in this state?

R. K: I do not understand Your Holiness' question. Certainly he is responsible.

H. H: Not necessarily so. He is confident that, even if he leaves the family so unprovided for, the family will not suffer any inconvenience because you are there to look after it. It seems to me that you alone are responsible for his confidently aspiring to become a Sannyasi and it is for you to shoulder all his responsibilities also. With the blessings of God, you will find no difficulty in carrying them out.

With this gracious blessing, I returned home. My father stayed on at Sringeri.

Some time later, Sri Srikantha Sastri had arranged for the marriage of his only daughter at his ancestral home at Nanjangud in the extreme south of the Mysore State. As my father was an old and intimate friend of his, he was very

particular and pressed my father to attend the function but the latter explained to him that his stay at Sringeri was for a purpose quite different and so declined to accompany him. When in the evening my father went to His Holiness, His Holiness asked

“There seems to be a marriage coming on shortly in Srikantha Sastri’s house. I suppose you are attending it?”

G. R: No. Why should I go there? The aim of my coming here and staying here is only Sannyasa. What have I to do with a marriage?

H. H: It is no doubt true that you have nothing to do there. But what is the harm in your attending it? You will be pleasing Sastrigal, on the other hand.

G. R: I am having my daily bath in the River Tunga, performing my ablutions, learning valuable lessons in Vedanta from Your Holiness and trying my best to steady my mind in one-pointed concentration. Why should I give up all this, travel by train to far off Nanjangud and mix with an uncongenial crowd? I do not like it.

H. H: Are you afraid that worldly concerns will again drag you into the world?

G. R.: I have no such fear.

H. H.: If you are sure about it, you may take this as a very good opportunity of testing your capacity to withstand the appeal of worldly influences. If you successfully stand this test, arrangements will be made for your Sannyasa. So attend the marriage.

In deference to His Holiness' direction, he did go and attend the marriage at Nanjangud.

Soon after his return to Sringeri, an auspicious date was fixed by His Holiness for his taking holy orders. As a Sannyasi was necessary to give Mahavakya Upadesa to the new initiate and as it was not the practice in the Sringeri Mutt for the Head of the mutt to give that Upadesa to anybody other than his successor designate, His Holiness asked Sri Kamalananda Narasimha Bharati Swamikal of the Nelamavu Mutt, who was at Sringeri at that time and learning the Vedanta Sastra at the feet of His Holiness, to give the^{no.} initiation to my father.

N. Swamiji: Why? Your Holiness Your^{had} self may do it. ^{r at}

H. H.: May be done. But in the Sringeri^{me} Mutt there is a long-observed practice of giving^{an} very

initiation only to the next in succession in that Mutt. It is not given to anybody else in person.

N. Swamiji: Will not the same principle apply to my Mutt?

H. H: This gentleman will certainly not aspire to the headship of your Mutt if you initiate him. You need not hesitate on that ground.

N. Swamiji: If it is so certain that he will not claim any such thing, Your Holiness Yourself may well give him the initiation.

H. H: You are master of yourself and can do as you like. My position is different. I shall have to satisfy very many persons. Hence my suggestion.

Thereupon the Swamiji agreed. The preliminary ceremonies were all performed on one day and on the next day my father became a Sannyasi under the name of Sri Ramananda Sarasvati and was duly initiated by the Swamiji in front of the shrine of His Holiness' predecessor.

In accordance with the advice and directions of His Holiness, Sri Ramananda continued to stay at Sringeri itself for some months more, punctiliously and devotedly carrying out the duties of his new Asrama. He continued to attend as

before the Gita lessons given by His Holiness every morning and approached His Holiness at spare hours for the necessary guidance in his spiritual endeavours. He was given a room first on the northern bank of the river where he could remain quite undisturbed by the hubbub of the town or the activities of the Mutt. He found that place not only congenial to his temperament but quite conducive to his practising introspection and contemplation. Every morning he would go to and prostrate before His Holiness whether there was a Gita class or not. A few days after the taking of Sannyasa, he went to His Holiness dressed like other Sannyasis with his dhoti reaching up to his ankles.

H. H.: You may wear your cloth properly.

Ramananda: Is my method of wearing incorrect?

H. H.: Yes.

Ramananda: How else must I wear it?

H. H.: It must not come down lower than the knee.

Ramananda: I wore it so as other Sannyasis were wearing it only so.

H. H: Don't look to heads of Mutt for guidance in such matters. They have to conform to custom, etiquette and other factors which stand in the way of their strictly conforming to the rules of the Sastra. You are not bound by any such conventional restrictions. You can therefore afford to abide by the Sastras strictly. Hence my suggestion.

From that moment Sri Ramananda began to dress himself properly. This incidentally shows also how keenly He felt the headship of a mutt as a bondage preventing Him from leading a full Sannyasi life. It was always His ideal to free Himself from the limitations which convention or the world or His own physical nature might impose upon Him and to be always centred in His own limitless and resplendent Self.

His tendency to retire into Himself and to dissociate Himself from the world became more and more pronounced as days passed on. Early in 1923 He ceased to perform even His daily Puja or to hold the usual Vedanta classes and became completely oblivious to the world. If He bathed or dined, He did it mechanically as a kind of reflex action without applying His mind as it was really engaged

elsewhere. Rumour of His state spread throughout the land. The Maharaja of Mysore thought it proper to depute his Dewan Sir Mirza Ismail to visit Sringeri and try to ascertain in person about the condition of His Holiness. He went there, saw His Holiness, met the agent and talked also to Sri Ramananda but could not make out anything beyond that His Holiness' condition was unique and quite out of the normal. As it was not possible to say whether and when He would become normal again and as Sri Ramananda could not expect to have any more the guidance which he was getting from His Holiness, he decided to leave Sringeri and go to the banks of the Akhanda Kaveri where he could be a real Parivrajaka Sannyasi wandering about as prescribed in the Sastras. I went to Sringeri in the middle of 1923, to see His Holiness in His a normal state and to pay my respects to Sri Ramananda for the first time after he took Sannyasa. Though it was not possible for me to get into close contact with His Holiness, I learned enough to know that His plane of experience at that time was quite different from and far above ordinary human experience. I have recounted elsewhere some of the incidents which happened during that period and it is not necessary to repeat them here.

As instances of His "absent-mindedness", that is, His mind being absent from the external world and being however quite present in the Supreme Self, I may cite a few simple incidents. One morning He sat down to perform the Puja as before; He had completed the Abhisheka and Alankara and was doing the Archana repeating the names of the Sahasranama. A lamp which was burning near by happened to dim and this attracted His attention. He had taken a flower in His hand for the archana; His hand however automatically went near the wick of the lamp and began to move it so that it may burn brighter; it was obvious that He did not know what He was doing for He went on with the names of the Archana and with the pronouncement of each name the wick was being moved further and further till it moved out of the lamp itself and fell down. I was simply looking on as it would not have been proper for me to intervene. When the wick fell down and there was no more light from that lamp, His Holiness seemed to realise what had happened and smiled to Himself and resumed the Archana. I had to call the servant waiting outside to come in and attend to the extinguished lamp. His Holiness was quite indifferent as to its being re-lit.

One early morning His Holiness sat near a well-filled trough of water to bathe. He took a small vessel, dipped it in the trough, took it out and poured the water on His own head. After He had started this process, He forgot Himself so much so that even the water in the trough went down the mechanical process of putting the vessel into the trough, taking it out and trying to pour the water over His head continued though no water was really taken out of the trough. The servant who noticed this said to His Holiness "Shall I take the water and pour it?" His Holiness nodded assent and as He was now free even from this mechanical process He retired into Himself completely while the servant was pouring the water on His head. As His Holiness did not say that it was enough, the servant was in a fix as the entire water had been exhausted. So when he was pouring the last vessel of water, he made bold to ask "Shall I stop?" His Holiness said "yes" and immediately got up and hit His head on the vessel held above by the servant. The servant felt himself guilty of a great wrong, placed the vessel down, and prostrated before His Holiness and begged to be pardoned for his carelessness. His Holiness recalled to the

world by his words, asked "What have you done to be excused?" The servant mentioned what had happened. His Holiness said "You feel you have done an injury to your Acharya. Is it not so?" The servant said "Yes." His Holiness touched His own head and said, "Is this your Acharya? It is but an inert matter which came into contact with another inert matter. Don't think you have done anything to your Acharya." In spite of these gracious and pregnant words of His Holiness, the servant could not help regretting this incident ever afterwards.

Taking advantage of the few such moments when His Holiness seemed to be conscious of the external world, Sri Ramananda sought and obtained His permission to depart from Sringeri. A few weeks later His Holiness became quite normal and resumed His routine in the Mutt as ever before. At the insistent request of the Maharaja of Mysore, His Holiness agreed to visit Mysore, and started from Sringeri early in 1924. After touring the Southern Districts, He returned to Sringeri about the end of 1927. This tour gave the disciples there the opportunity of having His invaluable blessings in person. It was possible for me to visit His Holiness occasionally in the

near-by districts and more frequently during His tour in the Tirunelveli District. I had also the rare fortune of contacting Him often during His stay at Kaladi and at Sringeri.

CHAPTER X.

THE FAMILY DEITY

When my father went to Sringeri in 1904 or so to pay his respects to the then Jagadguru His Holiness Sri Sachchidananda Siva Abhinava Narasimha Bharati Swaminah, His Holiness asked him "Are you having any Puja in your house?" Just at that time a Bairagi from the North came to the presence of His Holiness and placed before him a big Mahalinga saying "I got this in the River Narmada. I thought it was proper for this to be here and so I brought it." His Holiness directed His attendants to suitably reward him and then turning to my father said "Just when we were opening the topic, the Lord himself has come here in person. He has come only for your sake. We shall keep Him in our Puja for a few days and give Him to you when you return home?" He

accordingly gave the Mahalinga to my father a few days later with His gracious blessings. Since then it was duly worshipped by my father.

About seventeen years later, my father went to Sringeri for the purpose of taking up Sannyasa. He took the Mahalinga there with him and handed it over to the Mutt when he took Sannyasa. It remained thereafter in the daily Puja of His Holiness the next Acharya. When I went to Sringeri in 1923 His Holiness was Antarmukha and it was not possible for me to request Him to give the Mahalinga to me. When I next met Him at Erode in 1924 it was the time of the busy Navaratri festival and then also I found no opportunity to place my request before Him. In 1925 His Holiness was touring in the Chettinad villages and I thought of going to Him there and making the request. I did go there. As there was a large crowd in the morning, I decided to make the request in the evening when He would be comparatively free. When I went and prostrated before Him, He asked me to sit down and, to my great surprise; His first words were "What have you got for Puja in your house?" "Only our Acharya's Sandals", I replied. He at once said "Do they seem *only* to you?" I hastened to explain "I did

not use the word in any such sense. I only meant that there was no Banalinga, Salagrama or other ingredients of Panchayatana Puja. He said "To you, the Guru's Sandals are quite enough. Nothing more is required for you". After this definite statement of His Holiness even before I could formulate my request, I could not with any propriety muster the courage to ask Him for the Mahalinga.

Some months later I went to Him again at Tirumangalam and found the Mahalinga missing from His Puja. I somewhat regretted my want of courage and felt keenly that I had allowed a valuable treasure to slip away from my hands. I did not care to ask who took it away. Whoever it might be, what could I do? It was lost to me for ever. In this disturbed state of mind, I prostrated before His Holiness without my mentioning anything about it, His Holiness said. "Sri Ramananda's Bana Linga has been installed in the Siva Temple at Mullipallam village near Madura." It was some satisfaction to me that, though I was not fortunate enough to get it, no other person got it and that it was installed only in a Temple. Thereafter I gave up all thoughts of enlarging my Pnia.

I had a sister who was the second wife of her husband. His first wife had died soon after a delivery and before she was free from pollution. As the necessary rites were evidently not properly performed for her, her spirit chose to enter my sister's body very often and give her trouble. She would insist upon the concerned people going to Rameswaram and giving her relief. But as her husband's circumstances did not permit him to carry out her request, many years passed away without his being able to go to Rameswaram.

When I went to Chettinad and was one day sitting near His Holiness, a Brahmana gentleman came there and said to Him "My wife is having some possession very often. She loses consciousness then. I pray your Holiness will give us relief." His Holiness replied "There are two kinds of losing consciousness. In one of them the possessing spirit itself will say what it wants; in that case, relief can be obtained by carrying out its directions. In the other kind of unconsciousness, the patient will fall down speechless and breathless; if so, I must see the patient before I can suggest any remedy." The gentleman said "My wife lies like a log of wood. I shall bring her here at some convenient time later on," took leave of His Holiness and went away.

After his departure I mentioned to His Holiness "The other variety of spirit is troubling my sister but somehow it has not been possible to carry out till now its directions." "Is it so?" was the only reply of His Holiness. Some days later when I went to take leave of Him, He gave me a small packet along with the usual Mantrakshata. I asked "May I know what this is?" His Holiness said "The other day you mentioned about a sister. This is for her. When you return home, send it on to her and ask her to wear this Vibhuti also on her forehead along with the usual Kunkuma every morning after she had purified herself. Ask her to do it without fail." Accordingly when I returned home I sent the packet on to her and conveyed to her His Holiness' directions also. Before that small quantity of Vibhuti was used up, she and her husband with the members of his family found it possible to go to Rameswaram and perform all the necessary rites. There can be no doubt that all this was due to the gracious blessings of His Holiness.

It is necessary to refer to a few more incidents connected with this matter. After the Vibhuti was received and before the party left for Rameswaram, there were two occasions when my sister

had this spirit trouble. On both these occasions, her husband reprimanded the spirit saying "Our Acharya has graciously sent us Prasada. Why do you any longer trouble us?" The reply on both the occasions was "Why did she not wear the Vibhuti today?" At once the Vibhuti was taken and put on her forehead. She at once was free from the trouble. It appeared that, in her pre-occupation with her household duties, she forgot to wear it on those days.

After their return from Rameswaram after performing the ceremonies there, Brahmanas were given the usual feast one day. On that night again my sister got trepidation in her whole body and her lips and eyes were quivering, the usual symptoms of possession by the spirit. Her husband said "With the Acharya's blessings we went to Rameswaram and have now returned. Are you not satisfied even now? Why do you trouble us?" The spirit replied "I have not come for causing any trouble. I have come just to take leave of you." He said "Is that so? Go safely." But she said "It will not be enough if you simply ask me to go. You must give me a proper send off. You must tie up a cocoanut, fruits, betel, arecanut and turmeric in my cloth." This was accordingly

done. Then she said "Be happy and prosperous. I take leave." My sister who was sitting up till then reclined and rested. A few minutes later she woke up. The cocoanut, fruits, betel and arecanut were missing from her waist cloth. Except a single piece, the rest of the turmeric also was gone. The modern-day researchers unable to explain such phenomena will take the short cut of denying that they ever happened. But to those who believe that there are many a thing beyond our ken, there will be no surprise or disbelief in such happenings.

Some years later this same sister was suffering from consumption. Every kind of medical treatment was tried but with no success. One day my mother came upstairs and said to me "There seems to be no use at all in medical treatment. Though our Acharya has been informed, we have not yet received His Prasadam. Can we not ask some competent Mantrika to see her?" I told her "There is a gentleman known to me. He is a rich man and not a professional Mantrika. He is very capable and a devotee. I shall send a man to fetch him." Just when I was saying this, an alarming cry was heard from the room in which my sister, was laid up. My mother and myself immediately

ran down in fear and haste and found my sister who was incapable of the slightest movement before, sitting up in her bed. Her eyes were closed but quivering. Her lips also were quivering a great deal. Suspecting that it was the old spirit trouble, I asked "What is the matter?" In a very firm tone came the answer "What were you consulting about upstairs?" I said "There has been no cure by the use of medicines. We were considering whether we may not call in a Mantrika." In the same tone the reply was "No Mantrika ought to enter this house. There is no need for it. If it is possible, I shall myself take care of it." A minute later the voice asked "Do you know who I am?" I said "It must be only our family diety. So far as I know, there is no family deity for us other than our Acharya". When saying this I had in my mind only the previous Acharya for He alone had then attained freedom from embodiment and was therefore omnipresent and capable of blessing all His devotees. So I was somewhat taken aback by the next question put to me. "If you are so sure about it, why did you not give her the Vyasa Akshata and Kunkuma that I sent to you?" I replied "I have not given them to her as she has not been bathing for some time." "It does not matter. Give them to her" was the

direction got. I made myself immediately ceremonially pure, took the Akshata and Kunkuma from the Puja and gave them to my sister. She then slowly lay down and slept. No Prasadam was received at all from Sringeri and she passed away a few days later.

It was then that I realised the full significance of the words "If it is possible, I shall myself take care of it." It was then again that I realised that the first wife's leaving a turmeric piece behind was an indication that my sister also would pass away during her husband's life.

But this incident aroused a doubt in my mind. When the figure of the previous Acharya was before my mind's eye as the family diety, the expression "The Vyasa Akshata which I sent" was used without contradicting me and it could properly relate only to the Acharya then seated in the Peetha. I could find no solution for this doubt. At that time His Holiness had completed His South Indian tour and had returned to Sringeri. The Vyasa Akshata and Kunkuma came only from Sringeri. I shall mention presently how this doubt got resolved. I shall mention however even now the solution. His Holiness and His Guru were distinct

only in their physical encasements but were not distinct in their essence. If we apply this principle to the previous Acharyas also, we will easily realise that all of them were essentially Sri Sankara Bhagavatpada Himself and, if we pursue it still further, we will realise clearly that none of them was really distinct in essence from God the Prime Acharya of the universe. Ordinarily we attach importance to the limiting encasements and forget the identity of spirit within. Even if we are reminded about this truth, our habits of thought prevent us from grasping and realising it.

One night I had a vivid dream that I went to Sringeri. Just at that time His Holiness had finished His Puja and was performing Deeparadhana. He was standing on a high platform with a very spacious shed in front to accommodate the devotees who had gathered there in great numbers to see the Puja. As I did not like to disturb anybody then, I stood at the entrance of the shed and witnessed the Deeparadhana. As soon as it was over, the curtain in front of the platform was dropped as usual to enable His Holiness to prostrate before the Deity. Taking advantage of this interval, I slowly made my way towards the platform and reached it just in time

to see the curtain raised. On my way there I seemed to hear some recital of Stotras and even clapping of hands to beat time. The voice that I heard did not resemble that of His Holiness but seemed to resemble that of the previous Acharya. As I was positive that I saw His Holiness doing the Deeparadhana, this mystified me a great deal. Imagine my surprise that, when the curtain was raised, it was the previous Acharya that was actually standing on the platform. He graciously turned towards the crowd with His beaming smile and, after blessing me with a significant look and smile, He got down the steps and entered His residence. It was the previous Acharya; there was no doubt about it; but there was an extraordinary growth of hair on His face which puzzled me as I had never seen Him like this before. The Mutt Pandit Sri Krishna Sastrigal happened to be standing by my side and I asked him "What is the matter? His Holiness does not seem to have had a shave for a very long time." He said in reply "When did you see Him last?" I said "It would be more than twenty years." "Is that not sufficient for the hair to grow so long?" was his ready answer. This somehow satisfied my dream mind but another doubt arose. "But I have come here three or four times during this period but I

have not met Him at all. How is that?" The Pandit answered "He has been here throughout. Evidently you did not know that He was here and so failed to see Him." This was the end of the dream and I woke up. This dream began to trouble me a great deal for I realised that, whenever I went to Sringeri, I had always thought that the previous Acharya was no more in our midst and could not therefore be seen. I did not think of Him as still living. I felt that God gave me this dream so that I might know for certain that the previous Acharya was not dead but was still with us though in a subtle form. This made me resolve to go to Sringeri in person and sense the living presence of the Acharya there. With this as my main object, I went to Sringeri in 1932. His Holiness asked "What takes you here so unexpectedly?" I told him about the dream and added "I feel I have been guilty of a very great wrong in assuming that the revered Acharya was no more here and my main object in coming here now is to get rid of that impression." His Holiness simply said. "Your experience is a good one" and did not offer any suggestions.

To realise my object, I would go daily, both in the mornings and in the evenings, to the shrine

close resemblance to those of the previous Acharya. I came to the conclusion that they were really identical in essence, that if I longed to see the previous Acharya I must see Him in His Holiness Himself and that He really continued to live as the latter. This conclusion was most satisfactory to me and seemed to be the only one possible. But it was not possible to have it verified by asking anybody about it for he might think I was making too much of a dream. Nor was it possible or proper for me to ask His Holiness Himself about the accuracy of my conclusion, for how could I ask Him if He was one in essence with the previous Acharya and how could He answer that He was. Anyhow as I was quite satisfied with this solution, I did not worry myself about it any further. I stayed on for a few more days at Sringeri and then one evening I went to His Holiness.

R. K: If Your Holiness will permit me, I desire to leave for home to-morrow morning.

H. H: Yes, you may do so. When are you starting?

R. K: At about nine in the morning.

the Junior Swami seated side by side. When His Holiness gave me leave to depart, He moved the cup of Mantrakshata towards the Junior Swami and said "He is starting for home. Please give him Mantrakshata". I accordingly had the Mantrakshata, took leave of them both and started for home. Though I am quite conscious that I failed at the very first test made by His Holiness and that it has not been possible for me to carry out in full the lesson that I learnt from this incident, I can confidently assert that I have never failed to bear in mind this very valuable lesson. It is quite obvious that the ideal of oneness of spirit is impossible of realisation as long as we attach importance to external forms. It is equally obvious that such an ideal must be realised in the end, however long it may take us to do so. The Supreme Spirit which is pervading and assuming the forms of the several Acharyas must alone be sought for our guidance.

CHAPTER XI

A DEVOTED SERVANT.

Sri Srikantha Sastri who was the agent of the Mutt came to it in his 10th year and served it with great ability till his 62nd year. He was not only the administrator of its varied temporal concerns but had acquainted himself with the religious routine also of the Mutt so much so that, whenever the priests there or even His Holiness found it inconvenient to attend to the daily worship, Sri Sastri himself would step in to do it. His private worship was itself a very elaborate one. As he entered upon his official duties very early in his life, he had not the opportunity to become proficient in any particular Sastra but he easily acquainted himself with the main teachings of most of the Sastras and had acquired the competency to judge aright the merits of the several scholars who came to the Mutt. That he was a good hand in composing beautiful stanzas is clear from the collection of his compositions published under the name of "Guruprasada Mahimadara". He served under His Holiness Sri Sachchidananda Narayana Bharati Swamish for about 21 years and under His Holiness Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati Swamish for about 10

years and during this long period of administration he carried out very many valuable improvements in the Mutt. It was only in 1931 when the present Jagadguru Sri Abhinava Vidyatirtha Swaminah was given Sannyasa by Sri Chandra-sekhara Bharati Swaminah that he was able to obtain permission of the latter to retire from service. Even afterwards as there was none else of his wide experience of the affairs of the Mutt, he was being repeatedly consulted by his successors and very often by His Holiness Himself, in many matters concerning the traditions or the history of the Mutt. He took Apat Sannyasa in 1949 and passed away at Mysore in 1950. It may therefore be stated that his entire life was spent in the service of the Mutt.

It is scarcely necessary to point out that, to carry out efficiently the responsibilities of any high position, it will not do to be soft but it will be necessary to be very often stiff or at least seem to be stiff. Sri Sastri was eminently fitted by God for such a job. He had not only a very commanding personality but had a temperament and tone which would discourage all familiarity in those who came into contact with him. If any person happened to talk to His Holiness on any worldly subject, He would simply say "This is a

secular matter, you may talk to Sri Sastrigal about it". Almost invariably that person would not have the courage to approach Sri Sastri or to broach the subject with him. Even when Sri Sastri was talking on any small matter, his tone would be ringing with command and power so much so that those who had no opportunity of moving with him at close quarters would easily mistake him as over-bearing.

When His Holiness was camping in a village in the course of his South Indian tour, Sri Sastri happened to notice that a bright lamp was burning one night, though it was long past midnight, in the room of His Holiness. He immediately went there and found His Holiness reading some book.

Sastri : Why this reading at dead of night?

H. H : During the tour, when else is there the time for reading?

Sastri : What You have read till now is quite enough.

H. H : It must seem enough to me.

Sastri : If it does not seem enough, the study may be resumed after we return to Sringeri.

H. H : Is there any guarantee that we shall live till then?

Sastri: It is not proper to ask such questions. If You were an ordinary Sannyasi I would not care to plead with You. You must remember that You are occupying a very responsible position as an Acharya of Sringeri Peetha.

H. H: What if I am?

Sastri: Why? As long as You are occupying this position, Your body is the property of the disciples and it is not proper for You to strain it as You please.

H. H: Is it even so?

Sastri: Certainly it is so.

H. H: (smilingly) What is the desire of the disciples now?

Sastri: That You must take rest now.

H. H: It shall be done.

He immediately shut the book up and rested. If any ordinary person had been listening to this conversation from outside, he would get the impression that Sri Sastri was lording over His Holiness Himself. Only a very few could understand and appreciate the depth of affection that was behind this conversation.

It is well known that His Holiness was, in his *purvasrama*, almost from his childhood treated as a member of Sri Sastri's family. It was quite natural that His Holiness always entertained towards Sri Sastri a kind of paternal affection and treated him with great respect. Further just before His Holiness took Sannyasa, he had to be initiated into the several Mantras necessary for carrying on the daily worship in the Mutt and this initiation was given to Him by Sri Sastri himself as he was the only person conversant with all of them. Naturally His Holiness looked upon Sri Sastri as a Guru also. As He desired to spend His time mostly in study and contemplation and similar pursuits and had not the temperament to engage Himself in worldly affairs, He felt intensely grateful to Sri Sastri for relieving Him of the responsibility of administering the Mutt by taking that burden upon himself. Sri Sastri fully reciprocated these feelings and bore filial love towards His Holiness. It thus happened that nothing would take place in the Mutt, either in the religious or in the secular side, without the knowledge of Sri Sastri. People who did not know of this intimate relationship between them began to think that Sri Sastri was even slighting His Holiness and was behaving like an autocrat.

Only those in the know could gauge the affection and respect which Sri Sastri bore towards His Holiness. I have heard it said by some people that Sri Sastri would never prostrate before His Holiness. As a matter of fact, as soon as his morning ablutions were over, the first thing that he did, before he took up any work, was to go to His Holiness if He was nearby and prostrate before Him. As he was in the service of the Mutt and would have to see His Holiness more than once during the course of a day, he would prostrate before His Holiness only on the first occasion when he met Him. The mistaken idea may have been engendered by people who happened to see Sri Sastri meet His Holiness later in the day. It may be recalled here that it was Sri Sastri that first prostrated before His Holiness even on the day on which the latter took Sannyasa. The excellent arrangements which Sri Sastri had made for the care and safety of His Holiness during the several occasions when He retired into Himself and was oblivious to wordly concerns are themselves positive proof of his intense affection and devotion towards His Holiness. People were not wanting who would interpret these arrangement also as a kind of restraint upon His Holiness.

In view of the extreme confidence which His Holiness reposed in Sri Sastri, the responsibility of the latter was heightened a very great deal. It was only natural that people who had reasons to be dissatisfied with any action of the Mutt concerning them personally would exonerate His Holiness of all blame and throw it all on Sri Sastri. But it was not in his nature to be disturbed by any such accusations.

One day a gentleman complained to me about Sri Sastri. Though I knew that the complaint was groundless, I thought it proper to inform Sri Sastri about it.

K: I know that the complaint is baseless. All the same, why should you give room for such complaints? People throw the blame upon you.

Sastri: Suppose I do not accept the blame and suppose His Holiness Himself did what I have done, will not the people be dissatisfied with His Holiness?

K: Certainly.

Sastri: Now, they do not blame Him but blame only myself.

K: Quite true.

Sastri: You will see now that by bearing the blame myself I am warding it off from His Holiness. I am really acting as a buffer preventing the blame from approaching His Holiness. This itself I view as a valuable service to His Holiness. Let the people abuse me as they like. It is sufficient for me that I am effectively preventing the abuse reaching His Holiness.

K: I understand your position. But you assume that His Holiness would behave in the same way as you do in any particular matter. It may well be that His conduct will be above all possibility of complaint.

Sastri: Firstly, you are wrong in thinking that I do any thing without consulting His Holiness. I do not engage myself in any responsible action without consulting Him. But it will be improper and impracticable to be giving out on every occasion that I am doing this on the advice and directions of His Holiness. Secondly, if I begin to give out like that, will I not be really exposing His Holiness and giving the dissatisfied person the ground and the opportunity to blame His Holiness directly? Now everything good is ascribed to His Holiness and everything bad to

me. Let it be as it is. I have the mental satisfaction that I am conducting myself consistently with the prestige and convenience of the Mutt and His Holiness. This is enough for me.

* * * * *

Sri Narasimha Jayanti, the day on which God appeared in the form of Narasimha (Man-Lion) to punish Hiranyakasipu and bless his son Prahlada, is usually celebrated in the Mutt with special Puja. His Holiness would sit down for that puja after the mid-day bath and worship Sri Narasimha with great devotion till dusk. On one such day, His Holiness was not keeping good health and Sri Sastri obtained His permission to do that Puja himself. He also sat down for the Puja after taking his noon-bath and leisurely went on with the Puja with great punctiliousness. At about four o'clock in the evening, he finished the Puja and came out. I happened to be there and I remarked to him "It is tiring work." He turned upon me and said "What do you mean? Are you ridiculing me?" I said "Certainly not. I only gave expression to my sympathy and admiration." He replied "As His Holiness was not well to-day I got permission to do this Puja myself in His stead. I sat down to it determined to do it just as He would. I carried it out as far

as possible without any drawback. But I lacked the peace and concentration which characterise Him. He has a light body and I have not. So when I was proceeding with the Puja my body began to clamour for an early termination of the Puja. I resisted it as far as I could. When I felt that it was no longer physically possible to continue to sit, the thought that His Holiness would do the Deeparadhana only at dusk when exactly God Narasimha manifested Himself required me to persist in the Puja till then but my body would not allow it. I had to finish the Puja shame-facedly and came out with a painful feeling of disappointment and regret. Having undertaken to do the Puja in the place of His Holiness, I felt keenly that I was not able to do it as He used to. When I was coming out thus ashamed of myself, you offer the remark that it is a tiresome business. Does it not really amount to ridiculing me? How can I ever be like Him?"

Sri Sastri was mostly engaged in his office work in the evenings and did not find time to attend any of the popular lectures delivered by His Holiness. One day he casually remarked to me "It appears that His Holiness is able to lecture fluently in Tamil." I said "Yes." He further said "I have had the opportunity at least of

moving with Tamilians somewhat closely from the time of our previous Acharya. His Holiness however did not know Tamil till He started from Sringeri except a few words picked up while conversing with devotees who came to Sringeri from the Tamil Districts. The people were surprised to hear Him lecture in Tamil at Satyamangalam itself just across the Mysore state border. It is not clear how He learned it."

In the evening of the same day, it had been arranged to invest a Zamindar with a title and besides the Zamin officials and the Mutt officials several prominent gentleman in high position or learned had been invited to the Durbar where the investiture was to be made by His Holiness. As the diploma was in the Sanskrit language, His Holiness asked Sri Sastri to read it. He did so. Then His Holiness said "As it is in Sanskrit, the Zamindar himself and many others here may not have understood its purport properly. As you have been in touch with Tamil country for a very long time, it will be well if you yourself explain it in Tamil to them." Sri Sastri began to do so but could not proceed beyond a few words and even those few words were not quite intelligible to the audience. Noting this, His Holiness said. "Shall I myself explain it? I hesitated only

because of my deficiency in Tamil." Sri Sastri readily assented glad to be let off and sat down to listen. Then His Holiness gave out in a few words the purport of the diploma and explained for about half an hour the significance of the phrases there so beautifully and impressively that all there felt their faith in the Sastras deepened and strengthened. As this was the first occasion when Sri Sastri listened to any Tamil exposition by His Holiness, his astonishment was unbounded. Even the Tamil Pandits there were surprised and astonished at the pure and clear style of His Holiness. Later on Sri Sastri remarked to me "His Holiness' command of Tamil is certainly not derived from contact with Tamilians. The unbounded grace of Sri Sarada and of His Guru must be responsible for it."

It has been mentioned before that Sri Sastri had intense devotion towards the previous Acharya and that his respect for His Holiness was tempered by a sort of filial affection. He had asked the previous Acharya more than once for initiation to the Brahmasutra Bhashya but had always met with the response "What is the urgency for you? You will get it later on." He could not get initiation from Him. After He attained freedom from embodiment, Sri Sastri thought within

himself "I have been for all these years closely moving with Him and serving Him to the best of my capacity. Yet He did not favour me with this initiation. It is clear that I am not destined to have it in this life. When I could not get it even though I had that illustrious Guru to serve, it will not be proper for me to seek it at the hands of any other Guru." When as years passed eminent pandits and high personages praised the wonderful style of His Holiness' exposition and the masterly way in which He handled abstruse discussions in the several Sastras, he somewhat accepted His greatness but would not concede that He could equal the previous Acharya. Sometime after he retired from service and was staying in his village, he seriously thought "I am denying myself the initiation simply because I failed to get it from the previous Acharya. Who is the loser thereby? Am I not wasting my time out of mere pique? All pandits agree in praising the present Acharya. Why not I get initiation from Him treating Him as the representative of the previous Acharya?" This thought grew stronger day by day and made him decide to go to Sringeri and seek initiation from His Holiness. When he went there he disclosed to His Holiness the entire course of his thought without any reservation.

Sastri: In this state of things, I have come to You. Please give me a lift and make me blessed.

H. H: I have certainly no objection to teach you but you will have to agree to two conditions.

Sastri: I agree whatever they are.

H. H: The first is, that when I am teaching you nobody else must be present.

Sastri: This is quite agreeable to me also.

H. H: The second is, if in the course of my exposition you feel any difficulty or doubt, you must immediately mention it to me quite frankly. These are the only conditions.

Sastri: I feel myself more blessed than I thought. These are not really any conditions. On the other hand, You have perfectly gauged my real nature and You mention these as conditions only with a view to benefit me. If anybody is with me when You are teaching me, I will never give out any doubts nor admit that I have not understood anything. The apprehension that the other may think "Sastri has moved with the previous Acharya all these years and yet he does not know even this" and that therefore I may fall

in his estimation will prevent me effectively from putting any questions. It is no doubt due to my innate egoism. Further even if there is nobody else the same egoism will tell me that You Yourself may think like that and stand in the way of my asking any questions. Your Holiness rightly felt that this egoism will not allow me to imbibe Your teaching fully and in Your unlimited grace You have blessed me by seeming to impose these two conditions. I am very grateful to You and I shall then and there expose my ignorance to You without reserve to get it eradicated." With intense gratefulness he prostrated before His Holiness and from then onwards he began to study the Brahmasutra Bhashya daily at the feet of His Holiness. His Holiness thus expounded to him the whole of the first chapter and a portion of the second. The rest could not be proceeded with as His Holiness began to retire into Himself very frequently. Sri Sastri had thus the unique opportunity of profitting by the deep learning, the clear knowledge and the unrivalled power of exposition. Sri Sastri's respect and admiration transcended all bounds.

CHAPTER XII

TRUE SERVICE.

It is a well-known fact that Sri Sastri by his devotion and capacity had earned the fullest confidence of the previous Acharya also. As an instance of that confidence, an interesting incident may be mentioned. All the arrangements for the Kumbhabhishekam at Kaladi in 1910 had been perfected. On the evening previous to the date of Kumbhabhishekam, Sri Sastri was proceeding along a foot-path leading to the river in the back of the Mutt building. Evidently he did not notice a serpent lying on the way and trod upon it. It immediately wound itself round his leg and Sri Sastri with great force shook his leg and the serpent fell at some distance from him. He dropped the idea of going to the river and returned to the Mutt. This untoward incident greatly disturbed him physically and mentally and he was in trepidation. In this state he went to His Holiness who had just then sat down for His evening ablutions, prostrated before Him and told Him about this incident.

Sastri: On my way to the river a serpent encircled my leg. I shook it off and by Your

Holiness' grace I have come here alive. To-morrow the Kumbhabhishekam has to be performed and it will certainly be duly performed, thanks to Your Holiness' blessings. Still, in as much as the major portion of the responsibility of attending to the secular side of the function is entrusted to myself, this incident of a serpent catching hold of my leg has depressed me a great deal. It seems to me to be very inauspicious and to portend some evil. I pray that Your Holiness will be pleased to prescribe any expiatory rites which may have to be done to ward it off. It does not seem proper to go on with the Kumbhabhishekam without performing such expiatory rites. How can we ignore such a patently serious portent?

H. H. : What is there inauspicious in it?

Sastri : Is not the encircling of one's leg by a serpent inauspicious?

H. H. : It is not so. On the other hand, it is an auspicious omen. It only shows that I have in Srikantha Sastri a bold devotee who will kick off anything even though it be capable of mortal injury. There is no need therefore for any expiation. Let the function proceed without the least anxiety.

On the day previous to the previous Acharya attaining Videhamukti, Sri Sastri naturally felt very anxious about the state of His health. He went to the divine presence of Sri Saradamba and prayed for His restoration to health and, to assure himself that his prayers had been heard, he wrote out on two slips of paper "There is no fear for life" in one and "There is fear for life" in the other, and placed them before the Goddess and asked a young girl standing nearby to take out one of them. The slip that she took out said "There is no fear for life" and this greatly relieved and gladdened the heart of Sri Sastri. He immediately went to His Holiness.

Sastri : Somehow, I was very anxious to-day and I sought the decision of our Goddess and I got in answer "There is no fear for life". Then alone I got relief.

H. H : Her words are ever true and never fail. Certainly there is no fear for life.

Sastri : I am gladder still to have this assurance from Your Holiness also.

H. H : Life or Breath is only a modification of Air and is consequently only inert matter. How can it fear anything? It is therefore quite

correct to say that Life has no fear. Suppose the Soul has to go to some other region of experience, even then the life principle must necessarily accompany it even there; so the soul also has no reason to fear that it will be separated from life. Further as all beings have the greatest attachment to life, they are never afraid of life. If it so happens that there is no need to go to other regions of experience and absolute disembodiment is had here itself, the life principle and other factors get dissolved even here and merge in their casual subtle elements and in that case there is absolutely no ground for fear either for life or about life. Thus, in whatever aspect the words of the Mother are considered, they are certainly true.

This kind of commentary greatly dissipated Sri Sastri. He realised however its truth when the Acharya passed away the next day seated as He was in Yogasana. His Holiness was sure that He would the next day be free from embodiment and evidently He was reluctant to afford Sri Sastri any occasion for thinking that the words of the Goddess were untrue.

Some years after Sri Sastri retired from the active service of the Mutt, the Government of His Highness the Maharaja of Mysore took upon itself the burden of managing the properties of the Mutt and conducting its secular affairs. Though the Government prepared the budget every year, it added, out of respect to His Holiness, a note that any of the items might be altered at the will of His Holiness. Sri Sastri when he went to Sringeri felt very glad at this consideration shown to His Holiness' wishes and had a talk with the officer then in charge.

Sastri: I note that it has been provided in the budget that any item may be altered by His Holiness as He likes. Has He at any time done so?

Officer: No.

Sastri: Have you informed His Holiness that there is such a provision?

Officer: Certainly, I have told Him several times.

Sastri: What did He say?

Officer: He would not say anything. Sometimes He would simply say "You may do whatever is proper."

Sastri: Why don't you ask Him, what is proper.

Officer. I have asked Him. Even then the reply has been the same. If I pressed for more definite directions He would say "The budget itself is alright. You may act according to it." I realised therefore that it was no use troubling Him and for some time past I have given up asking Him.

In the evening, Sri Sastri went to His Holiness.

Sastri: I was very glad to see that in the Government budget it had been provided that Your Holiness might alter any item at Your will. Have You ever thought of altering it?

H. H.: Why? Everything is going on properly. Where is the need for my intervention?

Sastri: I do not ask about the need. There may be some kind of expenditure which Your Holiness may deem it proper to incur though it is not provided for in the budget.

H. H.: Why should I mention any new kind of expenditure?

Sastri: I did not mean even that. During all these years, did not any thought ever come to You that some item of expenditure not provided for in the routine budget might be properly incurred ?

H. H: As you are so particular, I shall answer you. Some months back a thought did occur to me that it would be well to have special Abhisheka to Sri Chandramoulisvara with Ekadasa Rudra Parayana and to feed not less than a hundred Brahmanas on the occasion.

Sastri: Was this mentioned to the officer?

H. H: Why should I mention it?

Sastri: If You had mentioned it, he would have carried it out.

H. H: That is just the reason why I did not mention it.

Sastri: I do not understand this logic. What is wrong in asking the officer to carry out a good idea that comes to Your mind?

H. H: The wrong is not in the asking but in the idea coming into the mind.

Sastri: Is it wrong to entertain an idea to do a good thing?

H. H. It is.

Sastri: How can it be when the idea is a good one?

H. H. There is nothing wrong in the idea. The entertaining it is not right.

Sastri: How is that?

H. H. Any kind of mental activity which leads to external activity is necessarily wrong.

Sastri: Even if it is useful? Is it so?

H. H. Yes. The arising of a thought is by itself wrong. Further when it is our object to minimise our mind impulses, it is not proper to give room for fresh impulses. If I had asked the officer to carry out this idea, he would certainly have carried it out. Immediately another idea would crop up demanding its fulfillment. In this way the ideas will go on increasing and the desire to have them carried out will also go on increasing leading to ever increasing external activities. If however we effectively curb the very first impulse, the further stages will be eliminated. That is why I did not think it proper to entertain the idea that came into my mind and curbed it.

Sri Sastri was very much surprised at the mental attitude of His Holiness. At the same time,

he felt, impelled to carry out His Holiness' idea. He had a talk with the officer and learnt that in a particular item there was some unspent balance.

Sastri: There is such a balance unspent. What do you propose to do with it?

Officer: What can I do with it? It is there.

Sastri: You may mention to His Holiness that such a balance is available under this head and ask him as to its disposal.

Officer: What is the use of asking Him? He will not say anything.

Sastri: Whether He says anything or not, is it not your duty to inform Him about it?

Officer: I shall certainly mention it to His Holiness and try.

He then went to His Holiness.

Officer: There is a provision of so much amount for this particular head of expenditure in the budget prepared by the Government. But only this much had to be actually spent and there is a substantial balance. I pray for Your Holiness' directions as to what to do with it.

H. H.: You may do as you think proper.

Officer: I do not know what is proper. Hence my troubling Your Holiness.

H. H: You may think it over again and do as you decide.

Officer: I have thought over it more than once but I got no solution and this not a matter in which I can consult anybody else.

H. H: I suppose the balance may be kept unspent.

Officer: No doubt so. But it will certainly be better to spend it away in some good purpose on your Holiness directions.

H. H: What good purpose?

Officer: I do not know. That is why I ask.

H. H: Sri Sastri has come. He has had a long experience in the mutt. If you think it necessary, you may consult him and act according to his advice.

The officer accordingly approached Sri Sastri himself for advice and Sri Sastri thought it proper to advise him to arrange for a special Abhisheka to Sri Chandramoulisvara and for the attendant Brahmana Santarpana. The function was duly

performed and His Holiness was informed about it. When His Holiness met Sri Sastri later on, He said :

“Out of great affection for me, you have chosen to carry out an idea which came into my mind long ago. On hearing of it, I felt in spite of myself a wave of pleasant satisfaction in my mind. I realised from this that I have not yet learned to be completely detached in mind. I must thank you, for giving me this opportunity to know that my mind was still weak.”

Sri Sastri was quite astonished at this remark of His Holiness.

It may be stated without any fear of contradiction that after Sri Sastri, there has been nobody in the Mutt who could read His Holiness' mind with such deep devotion and carry out His unexpressed wishes also.

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When Sri Sastri was about 80 years old, he one day keenly felt that he might not survive for more than a few days and suddenly without any previous arrangements pronounced the sacred Mantras leading to the stage of Sannyasa.

In view of the urgency that he felt, he dispensed with the preliminary ceremonies and rites. Though the Sastras allowed such a latitude in urgent cases, they insisted upon proper initiation by a competent Guru later on if he survived the emergency. On hearing about this sudden action of Sri Sāstri, a friend of mine and myself went to Mysore and learnt from him the details.

K: Now that you are fairly alright, what arrangements are you making to get proper initiation into the Mahavakyas?

Sāstri: I joined the Mutt early in the time of the previous Acharya Himself and spent my lifetime in His service. I asked Him once for permission to take Sannyasa. He said that I would get it later on. Now that He is not before our mortal eyes, it is my earnest desire to go to Sringeri and have Upadesa in front of His sacred Samadhi from the present Acharya Himself if possible or, if that is not possible, from anybody chosen by the present Acharya for that purpose. I can then feel that I am having the Upadesa directly from the previous Acharya Himself. I have written accordingly to Sringeri and I am expecting a reply.

K: But will the condition of your body allow you to undertake a journey to far off Sringeri?

Sastri: As I am very keen upon having the Upadesa in the Samadhi, I think of going there direct in a motor car with adequate help.

K: As this is likely to be delayed, will it not be better to have the Upadesa immediately from a Sannyasi who may be near by?

Sastri: The idea is no doubt good. But you know my temperament. I am now 80. If I have to accept with all my heart any person as my Guru and prostrate before him, I shall expect him to be older than myself, to be a very learned scholar, to be deeply devoted to our Mutt and to have closely moved with the previous Acharya.

K: It will certainly be difficult to find out a person with such qualifications.

Sastri: Not necessarily so. I have thought over it and there is such a person in Sri Sankarananda now at Krishnarajapuram in the Tiruchirappalli District.

K: If you will permit me, I shall myself go and bring him here in a car.

Sastri: Don't be in a hurry. Let the answer from Sringeri come. If it is not favourable, we

shall consider about this. Further, it will not be proper at all to bring him down here for giving me the Mahavakya Upadesa. It is I that must go to him and request him for the initiation. If it becomes necessary, I shall myself go to him in a car as soon as my health permits it and get the initiation from him.

It so happened however that his letter to Sringeri was not properly understood by the people there and so he did not get the necessary sanction to go there for the Upadesa. Even if he had got the sanction, it would have been impossible for him to go there as his physical condition began to deteriorate and he became extremely emaciated. He could not move out of Mysore at all and passed away in 1950. His body was interred in a corner of the open space in front of his bungalow at Kalhalli about 15 miles from Mysore and 3 miles from Nanjangud his native village. His Holiness felt this loss very keenly.

As he had served the Mutt for over 40 years with phenomenal devotion and capacity and had endeared himself and had made himself indispensable to His Holiness and to His illustrious predecessor and as everything that was done by them or the Mutt was really done by Sri Sastri, it

will be no exaggeration to say that his life history is verily the history of the Mutt itself. It is impossible to adequately assess the value of the services, secular and religious, which he has rendered to the Mutt. In private life also, he was known to be very kind, affable and generous. It will be well if any intimate relation of his takes up the work of writing his biography in all the aspects of his varied life. I am sure that it will be not only interesting but very instructive.

CHAPTER. XIII

SOFT AND FIRM

His Holiness never used to contradict, censure or discourage anybody that came to Him. On the other hands He would get hold of any good point in him and encourage him in it. As the result of the few minutes of contact with His Holiness, he would, thanks to His gracious blessings, improve greatly. Numerous have been those who have profited by such contact.

If anybody tells His Holiness that he is daily performing his Sandhya worship properly, His Holiness would immediately say, "Are you doing it? What higher means are necessary to help you to the highest good? The paths known as Karma, Bhakti and Jnana have all been incorporated in the Sandhya worship. There is no Mantra greater than the Gayatri. You have taken firm hold of it. I am very glad to hear it."

A gentleman was well known for his hospitality though he did not strictly carry out all the religious duties prescribed by the Sastras. His Holiness told him "I am very glad to hear it. In any kind of gift, the receiving person will never

think that he has had enough. It is only in the gift of food that the guest will say of his own accord that he has had enough and that is why the Sastras count hospitality as superior to other kinds of gift. Further when you are feeding a hungry man, you are really worshiping God who has manifested himself as Vaisvanara in the shape of gastric fire in him. It gives me great pleasure to know that you have pitched upon such a kind of divine service".

An old classmate of mine invited His Holiness to his house in his village and, when he was receiving Prasadam from His Holiness after the Puja, he said, "Krishnan and myself read together in the School. He is now a lawyer but I am idly sitting at home" and in saying it his regret was quite perceivable in his tone. His Holiness immediately said "Is it so? I am very glad to learn that you have already got what he has to earn. As you need not trouble yourself to earn any money, you will have more time to spend in spiritual pursuits. It is certainly a very good thing."

In the course of a discussion in Vyakarana in the presence of His Holiness a student used by oversight the word दधि: in the masculine while it

was really neuter. His teacher who was near by got angry at this slip and stared at his pupil. The latter however did not notice it. But His Holiness noticed it and said to the teacher aside in a very low tone “Two words दधि हि” This remark drove away the teacher’s anger and made him smile as he realised immediately that His Holiness out of His infinite grace did not want to discourage the student, particularly in a public gathering.

A disciple had a curious problem which was troubling him.

Disciple: If I read any Vedanta book for a long time, my head begins to ache. What is the remedy for it?

H. H: Does your head ache however long you may be talking to your friends?

D: No.

H. H: Does it ache when you are studying your office papers?

D: No.

H. H: Does it ache when you are reading the newspaper or story books?

D: No.

H. H: It aches only when you take up Vedanta books?

D: It is so.

H. H: It does not matter. You will have to endure it for some time. Then the aching will disappear of its own accord. Don't worry yourself about it. Don't stop your studies for this reason.

This disciple met me a little later and asked me whether I got headache when reading Vedanta books. When I replied in the negative, he told me "It is only just now that I realise the full import of what His Holiness told me. Evidently you are reading them as if you were chatting with your friends, perusing routine office papers or newspaper and novels. That is why you do not get headache. His Holiness told me that if the Vedanta was read in all seriousness and earnestness the head must ache". I did not think it necessary to dispute his commentary on His Holiness' words. He seemed to firmly believe that those who got no headache lacked in earnestness and that getting headache was itself a necessary step in the ladder of spiritual progress.

It is no doubt true that His Holiness never contradicted anybody but it is equally true that he

never gave way or abandoned His own stand. He was soft and at the same time very firm.

When His Holiness was camping in a village for the Chaturmasyam He used to expound the Sutra Bhashyam every morning. A gentleman who was punctually attending it wanted a holiday but did not like to miss the lesson.

G: Will it be possible to stop the exposition tomorrow?

H. H: Why?

G: I am a Bench Magistrate and I have court tomorrow. I have to attend it.

H. H: You may attend it.

G: But if there is a class tomorrow, I shall be losing it.

H. H: Quite so.

G: It will be well if there is a break tomorrow.

H. H: Are you paid for your office?

G: No. It is only honorary. But as I have taken up the duty, I have necessarily to discharge it.

H. H.: You are quite right. You may attend to it.

G.: But what about the class?

H. H.: Why should it be stopped?

G.: If not, I shall be a loser.

H. H.: What can we do? When there is a necessary duty, we have to attend to it.

G.: I make the request only because I did not like to lose the class.

H. H.: This certainly proves your earnestness. In the exposition going on here, the only person on whom it is incumbent to be here from the beginning to the end is only myself. Those who come to hear have worldly concerns of their own and therefore may come and go as they please. If the exposition is to go on consulting the convenience of every individual who is attending it, it will have to be stopped on most of the days.

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Another gentleman had a difficulty of his own.

G.: Is there any exposition tomorrow?

H. H.: Why?

G: I am coming from a distant village. If there were to be no exposition tomorrow, my coming will be in vain.

H. H: Why vain? You can have Darsana of Sri Chandramouliswara.

G: No doubt but -

H. H: No question of "But"; there is nothing higher than the Darsana.

Saying this His Holiness went away inside. I was standing nearby and the gentleman remarked to me "His Holiness has not answered my question." I said "He did not answer, evidently because He was afraid of you". He said "What do you mean? Why should His Holiness be afraid of me?" I replied "If He had said that there would be an exposition tomorrow and if owing to some reason or other it could not be had, you might say that you had come from a great distance only in vain. If He had said that there would be no exposition and it did after all take place at the instance of some earnest disciples, you might say that His Holiness had not kept His word. His Holiness did not therefore like to commit Himself to you either way and therefore did not answer your question." He said "No, no. I would not have

asked any such thing". "What then is the implication of your question?" was my reply.

A pious disciple who wanted initiation from His Holiness was asked to come on a particular day. He did come and was admitted to the presence of His Holiness. When His Holiness asked him to sit down for the initiation, he said "Today seems to be Ashtami." His Holiness immediately said "Yes, we shall see later on". The disciple accordingly came out and informed me "His Holiness forgot that today was Ashtami. I reminded Him about it. He has accordingly postponed the initiation." When he was saying this to me, another disciple was called in for initiation. Seeing this, he said "Just now I informed His Holiness about today being Ashtami. But He is calling in somebody else. How is it?" I told him "It is Ashtami only to you." "How can that be?" he asked. I explained "You entertained the idea that this day was not auspicious for initiation. If His Holiness had in spite of that given the initiation today and if by chance you got later on any headache or other ailment, you would be inclined to attribute it to the initiation on an inauspicious day. Realising this, His Holiness refrained from giving you the initiation today. To those who have the intense

faith that the day on which His Holiness is pleased to give initiation is by itself the most auspicious, it is unnecessary to refer to the almanac for an auspicious day".

* * * *

When His Holiness was touring in the Chettinad, owing to some serious inconvenience it was not possible for the disciples at Devakota to invite His Holiness just then and so His Holiness moved on without visiting that place. When His Holiness was camping at a distant village, the Devakota people who had by that time somewhat recovered from their inconvenience came to invite His Holiness and, as their representations to the agent were not successful, they found it necessary to make the request to His Holiness Himself.

Chettiar: We have now somehow adjusted our affairs. We are not happy over the fact that Your Holiness had to bye-pass our village. We request Your Holiness will be pleased to come now and bless us.

H. H.: When you invite us with such devotion, is it possible to say nay to it? We shall certainly come. As regards the when, you may ascertain from Sri Sastri.

Chettiar: We asked him. It appears Mahodaya or Ardhodaya is coming on shortly. Sri Sastri

says it has been arranged to camp on that day at Rameswaram. He is insistent that it is not possible to go to Devakota now and it can be had only on the way back. That is why we approached Your Holiness directly. We shall gladly defray all the expenses of going to Devakottah and returning here. We request Your Holiness to come to our village now itself.

H. H: Your anxiety to have the visit even now proves your deep devotion. We are very glad to note it and, when you are so earnest, it will not be proper for us to ignore your request. But it so chances that arrangements have been made for Abhisheka to Sri Chandramouliswara on the seashore on a particularly sacred day in the interest of the welfare of the world. I am thinking whether it is necessary for the Devakota people to bear the blame of preventing its being done.

Chettiar: As Your Holiness pleases. On the way back at least, Your Holiness must be pleased to visit our village and bless us.

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A learned scholar used to expound Srimad Bhagavad Gita in a very popular way to large audiences and incidentally get adequate remuneration. He came to His Holiness.

H. H.: I hear that you are expounding the Gita very well. I am glad to hear it.

Scholar: With Your Holiness' blessings, I am giving out what little I know.

H. H. We hear also that you are not attaching any value to a stanza in the 18th chapter.

The scholar immediately grasped the point and hung his head. The stanza is the one which says

"This must not be given out to anybody who has no Tapas, never to one who is not a devotee, nor to one who is not earnest about learning, or to one who dislikes Me."

His Holiness by this simple remark pointed out that to broadcast the teachings of the Gita to all and sundry without reference to their qualifications to hear them is against the definite injunction of the Lord Himself in the Gita.

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A pandit had composed some verses about His Holiness and read them out to Him. In one stanza it was mentioned that, though Sri Rama was the very embodiment of Dharma and had incarnated only for the re-establishment of Dharma, there was some slur talked about Him in connection with His killing of Vali and that His Holiness being free from such possible imputations was verily

pure Dharma in human form. His Holiness immediately pointed out that such statements were improper and showed His displeasure thus -

“It is unnecessary to consider now whether the conduct of Sri Rama in killing Vali was right or wrong or even whether the imputation of any slur to Him has any basis or not. I am only sorry that you judged me so low as to think that I would be pleased to be told that I was free from any kind of fault which even Sri Rama could not be said to be free from. Imagination and exaggeration may not be irrelevant in poetic compositions but they must never tend to lower the greatness of Sri Rama, Krishna and others.”

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His Holiness was certainly a great and loving spiritual guide but He was so only to those who sought His guidance earnestly. He did not care to answer abstract questions on Dharma or Vedanta which did not personally concern the questioner. He seems to have felt that in answering them He would be not only not helping the questioner in any way but would be only wasting His own time. A few instances may be cited to illustrate this.

One day a disciple posed a problem in Dharma.

Disciple: A man had two wives. The elder wife had a son and the younger a daughter but no son. That daughter however had a son. Now the second wife died. Who is to perform her funeral rites? Is the stepson to do it in virtue of his status as son to her also? Or is the daughter's son to do it by reason of his being a direct decedent of the lady? Which of them is the competent person according to the Sastras?

H. H: Are you the stepson or the daughter's son?

Disciple: I am neither. I referred to a happening in my village.

H. H: Let either of them ask. It will be time enough to answer. When you are neither, what use is it to you to know it?

Disciple: I can give it out to them when I go home.

H. H: Has either of them asked you to ask me about it and has either of them agreed to abide by my answer and conduct himself accordingly?

Disciple: No The question was put of my own accord.

H. H: Then it is quite unnecessary for you.

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Another disciple interested in "historical research" came to His Holiness.

Disciple: It is well known that Sri Vidya Tirtha was the Guru of Sri Vidyaranya. But in the Panchadasi he has made his obsequence to Sri Sankarananda. Can it be that Vidya Tirtha and Sankarananda are really one? If they are different, who is that Sankarananda?

H. H.: Is it necessary to know this for understanding the Panchadasi? What does it matter in whichever way it is? How do we benefit by knowing this? And what do we lose by not knowing it?

* * * *

A friend of mine happened to borrow my Srimad Ramayana volume for a few days and returned it to me. When turning it over, I found there a sheet of paper where the procedural details as regards the daily parayana were written. I found that they differed a great deal from the details which I myself was observing. When I met His Holiness next, I felt impelled to mention this matter to Him.

K: Are there several methods of doing the daily parayana of Srimad Ramayana?

H. H: Why do you ask ?

K: I happened to see a note kept by a friend of mine. The method found there differed from mine. So I asked.

H. H: Evidently when you saw that note, you began to doubt the propriety of your own method.

K: No, no.

H. H: You have no doubt then that 'what you are doing is in accordance with what you were taught at the time of your initiation?

K: I have no such doubt

H. H: If so, what is your object in asking whether there are other methods ?

K: I only wanted to know.

H. H: Knowing that, what are you going to do? Is it your intention to give up your method and substitute some other in its stead ?

K: Certainly not.

H. H: Then this question is unnecessary.

A disciple decided to "draw out" His Holiness for a long talk and felt that he could do so if he offered a congenial subject to His Holiness.

D: I request Your Holiness will be 'pleased to explain in detail the purpose of a stanza in the Vivekachudamani.

H. H: Which is the sloka ? Read it.

The disciple read it.

H. H: Which is the portion which you do not understand in this sloka ?

D: I no doubt understand the sloka. I want however your Holiness' detailed exposition of it.

H. H: The words of our Acharya are superb. It is not proper to mix with them any words of ours. Enjoy them as they are.

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A gentleman who had made a fairly careful study of Sri Sankara Bhagavatpada's Bhashyas came to His Holiness.

G: At the beginning of the commentary on the Brahma Sutras, our Acharya in interpreting the word अथ (Then) has mentioned that a person becomes competent to enter upon the study of Vedanta only after he has secured the four qualifications known as *Viveka* (Discrimination) *Vairagya* (Detachment), *Samadishatka* (Six courses of

training), and *Mumukshuteva*, (Yearning for liberation). Is it even so?

H. H.: You say that it is so mentioned by our Acharya and yet you ask me "Is it even so?" What do you mean by it?

G.: Does our Acharya mean that such like myself who are in worldly life are not qualified for the study of Vedanta?

H. H.: Is that not the meaning of the Bhashya?

G.: Is it then wrong for us to study it?

H. H.: How came you to doubt it?

G.: We have taken so much pains to study it. Is it all waste?

H. H.: Nothing is ever wasted. Every voluntary effort will have its own effect.

G.: If there is such an effect, how can we be called incompetent?

H. H.: Why? Who told you that an action done by an incompetent person had not any effect?

G.: What will be that effect?

H. H.: Did not Sambuka engage himself in a penance for which he was not competent and did he not get its fruit at the hands of Sri Rama?

G.: Why? He only punished him for it.

H. H.: Punishment was the fruit.

G.: Does it mean then that if one engages himself in an action beyond his competency he will be punished? This is really no fruit.

H. H.: Why not? It is as much an effect.

G.: If so, does it not amount to saying that if a person without the four prescribed qualifications takes up the study of the Vedanta it is quite wrong?

H. H.: What doubt is there? That is why the Sastras say संन्यस्य श्रवणं कुर्यात् "Study the Vedanta after taking Sannyasa."

G.: Does it not tantamount to expressly prohibiting householders from a study of Vedanta?

H. H.: Not necessarily so. The four qualifications are imperatively necessary for those who want to know Brahman. You do not want to know Brahman; you want only to know what the book says. It is only curiosity that impels you to look into it and not any other motive. Your

reading will not lead to knowledge of Brahman. It may help you to understand a few of the thoughts; it may familiarise you with such terms as Maya, Atma and so on which are met with frequently in such books. And the impressions so got may be somewhat useful when really you acquire the competency. That is all. For this, one may read it.

CHAPTER XIV

THE WORLD TEACHER

When His Holiness Sri Sachchidananda Siva Abhinava Narasimha Bharati Swamigal was asked by a foreigner how He could claim to be a Jagadguru, World Teacher, when there were so many non-Hindu faiths in the world, His Holiness said, "The word Jagadguru does not mean at all that I can claim any right as a spiritual teacher over everybody in this vast world. It only means that, if anybody residing anywhere in the world earnestly seeks my spiritual guidance, I am bound to give it to him as far as it lies in my power. A person may reside in a distant country and yet be prepared to be guided by me. Another may reside in the Mutt itself and yet be unwilling to abide by my advice. It is my duty to help the former and not the latter. To the former I am his Guru; to the latter I am not. The word therefore defines only my duty; it does not signify any right or jurisdiction over others who do not seek my guidance"

His worthy successor Sri Chandrasekara Bharati Swamigal rigidly adopted this attitude and never sought to convert anybody from one faith to another and even from one mode of worship

to another, much less to increase the number of His disciples or to widen the range of His influence but contented Himself with guiding those who earnestly sought His help. A few incidents may well be cited to illustrate this.

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A Frenchman wrote to His Holiness that the teachers in Europe were all intellectual and not spiritual men and added "I have no guide on the hard path. I am alone and I implore your help. I know you have great experience and powers. I know that space and time are nothing to you in a certain plane. May I ask your honour to give me light and peace?" The reply from the Mutt contained the following pregnant passages.

"His Holiness is highly pleased to see what an amount of interest you take in Sankara in spite of the great barriers of language and distance. He is deeply touched by your spiritual earnestness.

"The pursuit of Vedantic truth leading to Atmic realisation required as a preliminary qualification in the seeker that he should have attained a certain degree of spiritual awakening as much as of intellectual acuteness which he may have acquired in his previous births. And as he advances he may meet with difficulties which he can overcome only

with the help of a Guru. It is not therefore possible to prescribe any one course suitable for all stages. The following directions would however be found most helpful to seekers who are not able readily to consult their Guru at each step and who are eager to make rapid progress. The steadying of one's mind is a *Sine qua non* for the realisation of the Vedanta goal. Keeping this in view, the practices indicated below are advised.

“Firstly, Physical : The avoidance of all stimulating food, drink, and the adoption as far as possible of the vegetarian diet.

“Secondly, Moral : The daily exercise of universal love without distinction of any kind towards all beings and the actual rendering of helpful services to them in a spirit of selfless service.

“Thirdly, Mental : The cultivation of a habit of retiring into one's own self. Daily concentration of thought upon some single object held in the highest reverence through which spiritual light is sought. Concentration should be practised whenever the mind is fresh and vigorous and it may be resorted to as often as convenient without getting tired. The mind should be guarded against falling asleep during the exercise. One may start with a

few minutes practice and the period may be gradually increased.

“Fourthly, Intellectual: Enquiry (Vichara) should be made everyday and the problems of truth deeply pondered over whenever they occur.

“His Holiness fully realises your difficulties especially as you are struggling in an atmosphere surcharged with materialism. But Europe is bound to seek Vedantic light in due course. Only she has to persevere in her pursuit of truth in preference to things of a lower order. She is now steadfast in seeking truth in the world of physics. (Science). She will be led to the search of truth in metaphysics also provided her thirst for knowledge continues.

“Should you adopt the practices indicated above as far as it is possible for you to do so and write to His Holiness again, He will most gladly give you such further help as may be possible in this direction.”

It is interesting to learn that the gentleman earnestly followed these directions and desired to have a picture of His Holiness or Sri Sankarācharya to fix his mind upon and have “a vivid object of daily contemplation.” In reply thereto

he was informed that His Holiness was highly pleased to learn that he was pursuing with much earnestness the practical as well as the theoretical courses indicated and that His Holiness was much pleased to send for his use a picture of His own Guru which He Himself constantly kept before Him. He was cautioned "This picture should be approached everyday only when one is perfectly clean in body and perfectly clear in mind. Absolute purity in thought, in word and in deed, is demanded. The more steadfast and concentrated the devotion with which one prays for help seeking Atmic light, the more quickly does one receive the blessings of the Guru whose spiritual existence will always be felt whenever there is a sincere seeker. Kindly continue your efforts with this conviction."

(I hear that this Frenchman is now a famous scholar and is at present professor of Indology in the University of Madrid)

When His Holiness was on a visit to the village Palamadai founded by the famous Nilakantha Dikshita on the banks of the Tamraparni, an European proprietor of a nearby cenna factory and a friend of his sought an interview with His Holiness. His Holiness pointed out to them that God

must have had a purpose in giving them birth in Christian families and that it was their duty to seek spiritual progress along the lines chalked out for them by that religion and not to waste time in trying to find out the relative value of the several faiths. When expressing their gratitude to His Holiness, they said that they were returning home with a determination to be better Christians than before and that they now realised the catholicity of the Hindu religion. I happened to be the interpreter in this very interesting conversation and it so deeply impressed itself on my mind that I have tried to reproduce it almost verbatim and included it as the opening chapter of the book "Dialogues with the Guru." It is unnecessary to repeat its contents here. A perusal of the same will show how kind and considerate, how logical and firm, His Holiness was in enunciating truths.

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When His Holiness was staying for some months at Kalati in the then Travancore State in 1939-40, the Travancore Government had made all necessary arrangements for His convenient stay and among those arrangements was the posting of a posse of police officials. Even while on duty they could not be recognised as police officers as they were dressed in the normal Hindu fashion

with a dhoti and an upper cloth. They could easily be mistaken for ordinary devotees who were serving His Holiness. The Inspector General of Police at that time was one Mr. Abdul Kareem who had previously served in the Punjab and earned a name as a strict, honest and capable officer and had been specially invited to serve the Travancore Government to keep in check some troublesome elements. He heard about the greatness of His Holiness and desired to have an interview with Him. He wrote to the Mutt that he would be coming there on a particular evening.

Sri Srikantha Sastri who was then in charge of the camp told me that the visitor was a Mussalman from Punjab who might not know Tamil or Malayalam and that, as he himself did not know English or any northern Indian language, it would not be possible for him to converse with him and asked me therefore to receive the gentleman, take him to His Holiness, act as interpreter during the interview and generally make his visit fruitful. Accordingly at the appointed time I duly received him. As soon as he got down from his car, he said to me "I do not know anything about the formalities that have to be observed in approaching such a high spiritual personage as His Holiness.

Will you kindly instruct me in the matter?" I told him "No particular formalities need be observed. You may approach His Holiness just in the way you will approach anybody of your own faith whom you respect."

He said "Then I shall take off my shoes and come in my socks." I assented. After taking off the shoes he came with me and I took him to the presence of His Holiness. He saluted His Holiness with bended knees. His Holiness, after extending to him his usual smile of welcome, said in Tamil "From the behaviour of the police officers who are on duty here, I have received the impression that the Head of this department must be a very noble and pious soul."

Before I could translate it, Mr. Kareem himself said in fluent Tamil "It is the innate goodness of Your Holiness that is responsible for that impression. As a matter of fact, I am known to be a very hard and severe officer."

As I found that there was no further need to be there as an interpreter, I tried to get up and move away but His Holiness signalled me to remain and this gave me the opportunity to listen to their conversation.

H. H.: I see that you talk Tamil well. I was informed that you were from Punjab.

A. K.: I was in service in the Punjab for a long time but my native village adjoins Kodiyalam in the Tiruchirapalli District. In fact, Kodiyalam Vasudeva Ayyangar and my father were intimate friends, so much so that whenever the Ayyangar was away from his village he would ask my father to look after the temples managed by the former. Really therefore, I belong to the Tamil country though the emergencies of public service took me far away from it.

H. H.: Is it so? How many years more of service have you still got?

A. K.: Not more than a year.

H. H.: Have you made a deep study of your religion?

A. K.: I have not. I cannot say that I know even its fundamental doctrines or that I practice its tenets properly. From my boyhood I have intense faith that there is a God, that He is great and that nothing can happen without His knowledge or without His will. This faith has sustained me throughout my life and has prevented me from straying from the path of rectitude.

H. H: All religion is meant only for that. It is not necessary to learn the intricacies of any religion. It is more than sufficient if we have an abiding faith in an Omnipresent, All-knowing and All-powerful God who is ever watching us and is ever ready to guide and help us.

A. K: I am grateful to your Holiness for these words of encouragement. But I am conscious at the same time that I have not spent any time in religious studies.

H. H: If you want such studies, you will have ample time when you retire. Though it is never too late to learn, it seems to me that the old age is better spent in practising what we have already learnt than in trying to learn anything anew.

A. K: That is also my feeling. Having been in active service during the major part of my life, I do not think it will be possible for me to take to studious habits.

H. H: I am sure that you will have thought of your future after retirement and to one of such active habits it will be impossible to spend time idly without use to oneself or to others. Have you formed any idea about this?

A. K: One day I happened to think over this matter somewhat deeply. I wanted to spend my retirement in some useful work, useful not in the ordinary sense but some work which would be most acceptable to God. It struck me that, if I devoted myself to the service of that section of humanity which many so-called humanitarians feel it repulsive to serve, God would be more pleased than if I engaged myself in the normal activities of charity. This idea fascinated me so much that I have decided upon opening a Leper Asylum and upon personally attending to the patients there. It remains to be seen whether God will give me the life and the energy to carry out this idea.

H. H. You yourself have rightly realised that such service of the lowest in the scale of suffering humanity will be most acceptable to God. The idea is a very noble one and God will surely help you in carrying it out. Though in your modesty you would not accept it, your ideas quite confirm my impression that you are a noble and pious soul.

A. K: I pray for Your Holiness' gracious blessings to make me acceptable to God. I fear I have taken much of Your Holiness' precious time.

H. H: It has been a pleasure to me to meet you.

A. K: God willing, I hope to pay Your Holiness another visit at more leisure. I am a Muslim and I was very diffident about interviewing the Head of the Hindu religion and so limited the period of my stay here and undertook other engagements. When I come next time, I hope to spend more time with Your Holiness for Your Holiness' easy accessibility and abundant grace have made me feel quite at home with Your Holiness.

H. H: So be it.

A. K: When I come again, may I bring my wife along with me ?

H. H: Is she not Gosha ?

A. K: She is. But not to Your Holiness.

H. H: Yes. You may bring her. May God bless you.

[It is worthy of mention that the gentleman did start and was running a Leper Asylum after retirement.]

CHAPTER XV

SOME TEACHINGS

H. H.: Rich people think that, by having the wealth to get easily the means of worldly happiness, they can be happy and behave accordingly. If they are told that higher kinds of happiness can be obtained in other regions of experience or in future births and that they must spend out of the wealth in their hands now to ensure such higher happiness, they naturally get sceptic about future states as they are not capable of direct perception now and begin to doubt the truth of the Sastras which talk of them. They are reluctant to part with what they now actually have, for, if the Sastras prove to be untrue, they will have missed happiness both here and hereafter. They decide therefore that it is safer to cling to what they have now and enjoy as much as is possible with it and it is wiser also to do so. They have therefore no mind to spend anything for Dharmic purposes. There is some logic in this attitude. Some pious people who are deeply attached to their wealth may well advance another argument also. When God has chosen to give us wealth so that we may enjoy, it will be sheer ingratitude to God to

say that we shall not enjoy; we will be virtually disobeying Him if we decline to enjoy. Further, when God has chosen to give birth to a beggar or decreed that a person shall be a beggar, will not our helping him be a flagrant violation of His wishes? It is therefore a sacrilege to attempt to alleviate the poverty or sufferings of others.

The poor have no such spurious logic to call in aid to justify their neglect of Dharma. Some are born poor and some have become poor. They have no hopes at all of commanding any worldly happiness in this life. Do they at least realise that their penury is the result of past sins and that they must not sin any more? If they look forward to any happiness in the future, as it is impossible to get it in this life, their hopes must be centered only in the life hereafter. Do they realise this and try their best to practise Dharma and pray to God to be blessed with such happiness in the future? Even they are wanting in faith to engage themselves in the prescribed activities to secure it. It may be that they have to wander about to eke out a livelihood but they cannot certainly plead that they have no time for the Sandhya worship and such other simple things. Is it really a fact that it is their wandering that provides

them with the means of livelihood? They forget that even at the time of their birth their life-period, the joys and sorrows that have to be experienced within that period have all been fixed up. They forget what is good for them. The Gayatri is capable of yielding all that is good, here and hereafter. Yet if they are asked to repeat it, their minds refuse to listen. Nothing of what we amass in this world can accompany us when we leave it. It is only Dharma and Adharma that will come with us. It is not wise to ignore this.

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H. H: The true nature of the self can be realised clearly in this world or in Brahma-loka. In the intervening states like Gandharva loka, Pitriloka or Devaloka, the realisation will not be so clear. So says the Upanishad. To reach Brahmaloika, the highest kinds of activity and devotion have to be engaged in. A consideration of the trouble involved therein will make us give up the attempt and even the desire to go there. Even if by strenuous effort as prescribed in the Sastras we manage to go there, we must there enquire into the nature of the self and, even if we get the realisation there early enough, we must await the end of the present Kalpa, the life period of the present Brahma, before we can get absolute freedom from embodi-

ment for it is promised only when that Brahma gets it. To the person however who engages himself in that enquiry even here and realises his self, there is no need for him to go anywhere else and he attains freedom here itself. The wise man therefore will even here and even now try his best to attain the knowledge leading to liberation.

Disciple: Are not the Devaloka and other lokas the results of far greater Punya than what has given us this loka? How does it happen that in these lokas it is difficult to get knowledge?

H. H: That they are the results of greater Punya is itself the reason. They are not regions of spiritual activity. It is not possible to do any Karma there as they are mainly regions of enjoyment. The mind will be attracted by and be engrossed in the innumerable objects of enjoyments available there and will not turn to anything else.

Further, Detachment is a necessary condition and pre-requisite for knowledge and it is not possible to get it in those regions. In those regions there is no birth, growth, change, decay and death as we have here. From the moment of their appearance there to the moment of

leaving them, the persons there remain of the same age competent to enjoy pleasures and they know also no disease, hunger, thirst or other painful experiences as we have. Unless such experiences are had, there is no room for desiring to be free from them or for any cultivation of the sense of detachment to objects of enjoyment. In the absence of such experiences of pain, they will naturally be immersed in sensuous pleasures and will feel no need for any enquiry or quest for any higher happiness which can be had from self-realisation.

Again for the same reasons, it will be difficult to find self-realised souls there who can teach about the Self. If they are realised souls even while here, they will not go at all to such worlds; nor is it possible to get there such realisation.

Disciple: Does this mean that, even if the residents of the Devaloka and other higher regions, thanks to their extraordinary virtues, long to attain self-realisation, they cannot get any Guru at all there?

H. H.: If they have the capacity to go to Brahmaloка, they may go there and have Brahma Himself as their Guru or may find a Guru among those who are there and

have realised but have to wait for the end of the Kalpa to get absolute freedom from embodiment and are for the present carrying out some cosmic functions. If neither alternative is available, the aspirant must come down to this world itself. In any case, there is no chance in the other worlds.

Further, for the attaining of self-realisation, it is necessary to have a firm conception that the universe of duality is not real but is only an illusory seeming. An illusory thing cannot be said to have no existence, for it is seen; nor can it be said to have existence for it disappears the moment right knowledge is had. Is it possible for a thing to be conceived of as different from the existent and at the same time different from the non-existent also? When such a doubt arises in our minds, we have here the illusory appearances of a snake in a rope, a thief in a pillar, water in a mirage, silver in nacre and other such which seemingly exist but do not really exist. From such examples we can easily understand the statement that the universe also though it seems to be real is not really real but is only an illusory appearance. Such illusions are not possible where there is absolute darkness or where there is bright light. They require a semi-darkness to make their

appearance. We have here day and night, light and shade, and other factors conducing to their appearance. In the higher lokas however, there is neither darkness nor shade for they are ever bright. How can there be any semi-darkness there? There is thus no possibility of anyone mistaking one thing for another. Therefore, even if a teacher can be found to teach Vedanta in those regions, he has no illustration to offer to impress his teachings on the mind of the disciple.

If in this world a student asks "How is it possible to say that this insistent tangible universe is illusory?" the teacher may easily point out to him his own experience and say "When you are sleeping, do you not see very many extensive cities, grand palaces and several people in your dreams? Are they real? When you yourself have got the potency to create all these, is it inconceivable that the Omni-potent God creates this vast universe? Just as you know as a matter of fact that your dream creation, however real and substantial they may seem to be at the time, is all illusory, you can easily understand that even this waking world is really illusory from the stand point of absolute truth". Unfortunately for those in the higher regions, they never sleep and do not even wink.

They can have therefore no dreams at all. It is not possible to teach them the truth' with reference to the example of a dream.

Again, for the purpose of teaching us that there can be a happiness which does not depend upon external objects and which transcends also the need for any senses to serve as the channels of perception, it is possible here to point to the experience of deep sleep but it is not possible to do so in the higher worlds for those there never sleep.

If a teacher has to teach about the Self which is beyond the reach of the mind and the senses, he can succeed only if he has a familiar illustration to drive home the teaching and that illustration must be within the experience and grasp of the student. As none of these illustrations which are necessary for a proper understanding of the Advaitic truth is present in the higher lokas, how is it possible to teach it there? From this aspect also, we can easily see that it is not possible to get realisation there. Somehow thanks to the Punya accumulated in the course of several births, we have been blessed with birth in this world so eminently fitted for the acquisition of knowledge, particularly in this land of Bharata eminently suited for spiritual effort and more particularly as

the lineal descendants of the glorious saints of old. We ought not to waste all these invaluable advantages but must make the best use of them, follow the dictates of the Sastras step by step and try our best as quickly as possible to realise even in this life the highest good. This is our imperative duty.

* * * *

In the course of conversation a devotee said "It is said of Sri Ramanujacharya that he stood on the top of a temple tower and gave out the sacred Ashtakshara Mantra to one and all there. But some Vaishnavas discredit this story."

H. H.: Why do they discredit it?

Devotee: Though there may be some difference in actual practice, Sri Ramanuja has not given the go-bye to the rules of Varnas and Asramas. He has on the other hand emphasised the need for conforming to them. So they say he would not have done any such thing

H. H.: How does this action violate the rules of Varnas and Asramas?

Devotee: Will it not be a violation of Dharma to broadcast a Mantra obtained by

initiation from a Guru to sundry people who were not competent to receive it?

H. H.: What is wrong if we take it that what he gave out was not a Mantra and that he did not give them any initiation?

Devotee: Is not Ashtakshara a Mantra and did he not give it out to them?

H. H.: Neither.

Devotee: How is that?

H. H.: The definition of a Mantra is not a mere collection of syllables. It is a Mantra only when it is obtained by a competent disciple through the channel of initiation imparted by a Guru with his blessings. The mere repetition of the syllables is mere noise and never a Mantra. Similarly a disciple must in all humility approach a Guru, earn his grace and get the Mantra as a Mantra; then only will it be an initiation. Sri Ramanuja knew this principle quite well. It is just possible that, even in his days as now, there were some troublesome persons who resented his "secretiveness" and unduly pressed him to give to them also the Ashtakshara that he was holding so sacred. He would have told them that it was not a matter to be so easily communicated and that

it would not be a Mantra if so given out and that therefore there could be no benefit at all to them. Without heading this, they would have insisted upon his pronouncing it. We may take it that thereupon he got up the temple tower and pronounced the syllables and demonstrated to them "I have now pronounced the syllables. But as you did not get them in the prescribed manner, you will derive no benefit from hearing them. You only gave me this trouble unnecessarily without any corresponding benefit to you". If we understand the incident in this way, it does not violate any Dharma.

* * *

Devotee: In interpreting the Upanishad passages which characterise Brahman as Nirguna (quality-less), Sri Ramanuja says that the word does not mean absolutely quality-less but only "devoid of bad qualities" and that Brahman is endowed with all auspicious qualities. Is that proper?

H. H: The distinction of bad and good is only for us and not in Brahman. Our conclusion is that it is devoid of any quality. If it were meant to exclude only bad qualities, it would have been quite sufficient to say "faultless" and quite unnecessary to say "quality-less"

Devotee: As a smell may be a bad smell or a good smell, so can quality be either good or bad. Why not take it as bad quality in this context?

H. H.: On the other hand, as quality can be either good or bad, the word 'quality' used without any restrictive adjective would logically include both.

Devotee: I only meant to say that, as bad quality is also included in the general word "quality", there could be nothing wrong in interpreting the word as denoting bad quality.

H. H.: Of course there is nothing wrong in doing so. The wrong consists in restricting the word to bad quality. When the general word is used, what is the justification for limiting its significance to bad quality?

Devotee: Though the word "stench" means only a strong smell, do we not limit it to bad smells?

H. H.: Quite right. Have you ever heard of the word Guna (quality) by itself being used anywhere as denoting bad quality. When sage Valmiki asks of Narada गुणवान् कथं धीर्यवान् (Who is endowed with qualities as well as with prowess?), does he include bad qualities? Even

in ordinary use, quality invariably means good quality.

Devotee : Though not in ordinary use, the word 'quality' may certainly signify bad quality.

H. H : Quite so, but it signifies good quality also. Further, it is not proper to ignore usage. Suppose when we are sitting here a gentleman enters this room and I introduce him to you as a very "uneducated" man, you will be taken aback by such an introduction. Suppose I then explain to you that by "uneducated" I meant 'not educated in bad ways' and that I really meant that he had in abundance all the good kinds of education, will you accept this explanation? You may decide for yourself.

Devotee : Godhead is ascribed to Srīman Narayana reclining in the ocean of milk or seated in His golden throne in Vaikuntha. Do the Advaitis agree to this?

H. H : Why should they not? When they say that God is pervading everything in the universe, how can they deny Godhead to those resplendent forms?

Devotee : Then what is the difference between the Vaishnavas and ourselves?

H. H: They say that such forms are the Highest Reality. We say that those forms are the highest manifestations of the Absolute Reality which is really formless.

Devotee: What is the objection to accepting those forms themselves as the Reality. The Sun though seen in the sky pervades the world by his heat and light. Similarly though God may be seated in Vaikuntha He may well pervade the universe by His splendour and power. Can we not understand it in this way?

H. H: We may. But it must be noted that though heat and light pervade the world the sun by itself does not do so. Similarly, we will have to attribute pervasiveness to God's splendour and power and not to God Himself. When the Veda is positive in ascribing all-pervasiveness to God and in calling Him Brahman(Great), is it proper to transfer this all-pervasiveness to His power and limit His existence to Vaikuntha, Kailasa or other region however resplendent it may be?

Devotee: Is it wrong then to attribute forms to God?

H. H: Certainly not. Such forms are necessary for the spiritual aspirant to enable him to worship and contemplate. Further, when

as the result of his worshipping in the prescribed way he goes to other worlds for enjoying special happiness, his object of worship must be there to bless him. In any case, forms are necessary.

Devotee : An aspirant who is able to go to Vaikuntha or Kailasa will have transcended all love and hate. As he will be free from all desire for sensuous enjoyment, he will not be distracted by the objects there however enchanting they may be. He will have the ineffable joy of looking at the divine form there and will be content to live on thus for ever. Can we not take that state itself as the state of liberation. Why do the Advaitis postulate a still higher state of Kaivalyam "Aloneness" as the final goal?

H. H. : You are quite correct in saying that the experience in Vaikuntha and other similar regions may be treated as the state of liberation itself but the difficulty arises in granting to such a state eternality. It is neither practicable nor proper to say that one can be for ever enjoying the divine presence in those regions.

Devotee : Why not?

H. H. : Worship and contemplation are as much activities as other activities though they

are essentially mental. When the stay in Vaikuntha or other region is thus the result of the merit acquired by the performance of an activity though it be of the highest kind, it must have an end when the merit is exhausted by enjoyment. That is, a return to this world after the period of enjoyment is inevitable. So a stay there for ever is not practicable.

Devotee : How is such a stay improper ?

H. H. : If we grant that the devotee is looking at and enjoying the Divine Presence in such regions, we necessarily attribute to him the characteristic of being an Enjoyer ; as a necessary corollary, we are at the same time attributing to that Divine Presence the characteristic of " being enjoyed ". In all cases of enjoyment, the enjoying subject is conscious and is the self ; the enjoyed object is ever the unconscious and is the non-self. If we say therefore that the devotee is enjoying the Divine Presence, he really makes the latter an enjoyed and non-conscious non-self. This is a great sacrilege which the Advaitins cannot tolerate. They postulate therefore as the ultimate goal the state where the distinction of subject and object is transcended and where there is but one Reality.

Further, form implies limitation. It is not proper to say of any form that it is the highest Reality. Let us take for example the Lord Mahavishnu. He is described as holding up in His right hand the Chakra and in His left hand the Sankha. In that posture, there must be some interspace between the hand and the shoulder. Does this God pervade this interspace? If He does not, He cannot be called omnipresent. If He does, there is no reason to say that the form alone is God. He really pervades not only that interspace but also the place where He is seen, the entire region of Vaikuntha, all the fourteen worlds and all that is in them. How is it logically possible to postulate any form for Him without granting the existence of some space where He is not? If therefore we limit Godhood to any form, we are really denying Him omnipresence. This is certainly a sacrilege. Though it is not thus possible to accede to such divine forms absolute reality, we cannot deny them reality for all practical purposes and they are therefore as real as other things in the universe. Just as gradation of various sorts is a necessary factor in the universe, the reality of those forms is of a higher standard and of a longer duration than that of other things and it is in this sense that those forms are true and eternal. They are true

as long as we have the sense of duality. In our present state, we have to engage ourselves in the activities and devotion prescribed in the Sastras and we are quite unqualified to inquire about the ultimate Reality which can be realised only in the highest stage of knowledge; such an inquiry is now quite fruitless and to quarrel about the nature of that Reality is mere waste of time and energy. When the state of realisation is reached, the Reality will shine of its own accord and then actually there will be no occasion at all for dispute.

One day a disciple raised the question whether it was not necessary to know the meaning, the import and the full significance of a Mantra before taking it up for Japa. His Holiness said.

“Generally whenever the Sastra prescribes some activity it will also mention the benefit that can be got as the result of that activity. Before any person engages himself in any activity he must know to what it will lead him. If he has an accurate conception of the benefit to be obtained and also an accurate conception of the means to obtain it, his activity will certainly be very efficient and the resultant benefit also good. But if a man engages himself in a prescribed activity without these con-

ceptions, even then the activity will not be wasted for the relationship between an activity and its resultant benefit being in the nature of cause and effect does not depend upon the knowledge of the actor. All the same, this knowledge does make a great difference in the accruing benefit.

“The Upanishad when dealing with activity done with knowledge and without knowledge points out that the activity done with understanding, faith and knowledge of its secrets is *more* potent. This necessarily implies that what is done without these is also potent though not to the same degree. Our Acharya when commenting on this passage says that a man who takes a purgative will have motions whether he knows that it is a purgative or does not know it to be one. It may be argued from this that the knowledge is of no moment at all. To obviate this, our Acharya takes the example of a precious stone found in a forest by a hunter. He knows that it has some value as it is more glittering than ordinary stones but has no idea of its real worth. He is glad to part with it for a small sum. The purchaser, if he happens to be a dealer in precious stones, will know its real worth and sell the same stone for a considerably higher

sum. Though the stone remains the same, the benefits obtained by the hunter and the dealer differ vastly. This difference is not due to the stone but to the difference in their respective knowledges. Similarly, an action engaged in with knowledge and the same action engaged in without knowledge will be identical to all outward appearances but there is bound to be a great difference in their respective results. It may seem to some that our Acharya gave a different example as it was not possible to sustain the principle with reference to the purgative example itself. It was not so. If a man takes a pill without knowing what it is and has free motions, he will be afraid that he has taken some poison and will feel miserable. If he knows that it is a purgative, he will not only be not afraid but feel relieved of the impurities in his body and consequently happy. The swallowing of the pill and the resulting motions are certainly common to both the cases. But in the one case it leads to misery and in the other to happiness. The difference is not in the pill or in the method of taking it but only in the knowledge and the absence of knowledge of its nature. Thus knowledge is certainly a very important factor which affects the quality of the result".

CHAPTER XVI

VALUABLE ADVICE

Emphasising the value of Karma as a necessary step towards the attainment of Jnana, His Holiness said one day :—

A gentleman who had retired from service as a District Collector had a son who would not attend his school regularly or study his lessons properly. He was a very soft man and did not like to chastise the boy but preferred to plead with him. On one such occasion the boy asked,

Boy : Why should I read ?

G : You can get good marks only if you read well.

Boy : Why should I get marks ?

G : You will be promoted to a higher class only if you get good marks.

Boy : Suppose I am promoted, what then ?

G : If you study well there, you will be promoted to a still higher class.

Boy : After that ?

G : You can go to a still higher class.

Boy: After that ?

G : You may go up and up.

Boy: Take it that the highest class is reached. After that, what ?

G : Then you may try for some good employment.

Boy : After that ?

G : You will get a job and join it.

Boy : After that ?

G : If you discharge your duties properly, you will raise steadily.

Boy : After that ?

G : What do you mean by asking thus ? If you behave properly and give satisfaction to the Government, you can retire honorably on a decent pension.

Boy : After that ?

G : What is there after that ? You can stay at home and rest just as I am doing.

Boy : Why all this trouble, father, for this end ? I am even now at home and quite happy. Why not I remain in this state ?

It is true that the realised soul has nothing

look after what properties I have got. I am prepared to devote the whole of my remaining life-period in this service.

H. H: Do you know Sanskrit?

G: Yes.

H. H: How far have you studied it?

G: I have read the Kavyas like Raghu-vamsa, Kumarasambhava and Magha.

H. H: Have you studied logic or grammar?

G: No.

H. H: Have you studied any treatises on Vedanta?

G: I have studied somewhat of Vasudevamananam and Vivekachudamani.

H. H: You say you have no family concerns to worry you and have abundant leisure. It is also patent that you have intense faith in our religion. Can you not utilise your convenience and leisure to study higher and higher? Can you not utilise them for the observance of Dharma in several ways? When you have got the opportunity and the need to better yourself, what is the meaning of your not interesting yourself in it and of interesting yourself in the uplift of others. Further, if by your efforts

you seek to infuse faith in others, will they not first begin to scan you and find out how far you are yourself practising the dictates of Dharma? Your teachings will carry force only when you yourself observe them in actual practice. The attempt to reform others must come only after one has reformed himself. There is a saying, "How can one who does not know to swim help others to cross a river?" Please make the best use of the advantages you have got and make all efforts to better yourself. It is the proper duty of everybody to seek first his own spiritual progress.

Society is nothing but a group of individuals. *If every individual attends carefully to the duties allotted to him and seeks to get rid of his own ignorance, the society will automatically improve.* If, on the other hand, everybody begins to engage himself in the reforming of everybody else, it will not only be fruitless but will lead only to controversy and hatred. Our Acharya asks, "Who can be a greater fool than he who neglects his own interest?" Our life period is very short. Even for lifting ourselves up, many births of strenuous effort are required. While so, is it proper to think of spending any time in an attempt to uplift others? Nor is such a thing ever practicable. By making

such an attempt, we will only have injured our own interests.

Further, it is a mistake to think that others will heed what we say. They have their own pre-natal tendencies. It may be that, if we lead a good life, some people may be inclined to follow our example. As there is the likelihood of their going astray if we lead bad lives, we must be very careful how we conduct ourselves. This responsibility is necessarily very great if one happens to be the head of a family or the principal man of his village or of his country and has gained the fame of being a "great man". It may be possible in the field of politics or other secular sphere to make a mass appeal to a crowd and try to move it by your rhetoric and influence its thoughts but it is quite useless in the region of spiritual endeavour. You can gather together hundreds of people to drag a temple car. If you are hungry, there is no meaning in gathering a crowd; even if they gather, they will be equally hungry and cannot possibly achieve anything. Each one of them must necessarily eat for himself. Similarly those who are hungry spiritually and want to get rid of that hunger must seek the help of somebody who can point out the way. But they alone must do the seeking; they alone must tread the

path pointed out; and they alone must have their hunger appeased.

Again, it is meaningless to get together a large crowd of people who are not hungry and to teach them the way to get rid of hunger. That is why our Sastras insist that no teaching should be given to anybody who does not earnestly ask for it. Whether the asking is due to earnestness to know or only to mere curiosity will be easily apparent from the method of asking. The proper method of asking is prescribed in the Gita. One desiring spiritual instruction must reverentially approach a proper Guru, prostrate before him, serve him devotedly and earn his grace and then ask him till his own doubts are cleared. It is thus only proper that each aspirant should himself strive to know the means suited to the intensity of his own spiritual hunger and suited to his competency to pursue them properly and then make earnest effort to practise those means and attain his goal.

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II. II: The Sastras are emphatic that absolute freedom from bondage is possible only to those who have given up all sense of *I* and *Mine* in the body, the senses and the mind and have realised that their inner self transcends.

all these. While so, if a man is particular about nourishing them and yet expects to get liberated, he is verily like a man desirous of crossing a river in floods by getting up on a crocodile thinking that it is a raft. So says our Acharya in His Vivekachudamani.

Disciple: It is nevertheless a fact that for any kind of earnest effort we require a strong body.

H. H.: Quite correct. The body must be strong. There is no need for it to be stout. Further, it is not really in our hands to have a strong body. Only if we have past Punya, can we have a healthy body free from disease. What is really in our hands is to see that we do not take into the body we have got now any prohibited kinds of food and that it does not get into objectionable habits and that in general it is not made worse by our ways of life. It is not possible to escape the diseases and other ills which we are destined to have in this life and they must be endured. When we are afflicted by such troubles, they will lose their poignancy if we steady our minds and realise that by suffering them without murmur we are really wiping out our old sins.

Disciple: In this world there are many troubles which are really unbearable. How can they be borne?

H. H.: Have we not seen people cry out in the excess of their suffering "O! I cannot bear it. O! I cannot bear it"?

Disciple: Certainly.

H. H.: They are able to say 'so only because they do bear it. If it was really unbearable, how can they give expression to their suffering? The unbearability cannot therefore be absolute. There can be no doubt that, when God gives us a suffering as the result of our past sins, He gives us also the strength to bear it. It is therefore our duty to endure whatever happens as even that happens only by the will of God.

Disciple: I have heard it said that the physical body is a necessary instrument for the practice of Dharma. While so, how can we afford to neglect it?

H. H.: Nobody asks us to neglect it. On the other hand, we must take great care of it so that it may be competent to function as an effective instrument for the observance of Dharma. Further, most of the purificatory rites prescribed by the Sastras are only for the body. Only if the body is kept pure and is rendered pure by following the dictates of the Sastras, can it really be helpful in the practice of Dharma.

We must not forget this aspect of the body as an instrument of Dharma nor content ourselves with nourishing it.

Disciple: In the old days our ancients had penances and fasts but in these days we have not the stamina to undergo them.

H. H.: That is not correct. Even now there are many who observe them punctiliously with faith. They are not any the less strong in spite of such observances. On the other hand, it may be said that they are really stronger than others..

Disciple: It is no doubt so. But why? The moderns eat far more than they.

H. H.: A watch will run only if wound up.

Disciple: Certainly so.

H. H.: As a watch will run only if wound, do you wind it once a day or keep on winding it whenever you like?

Disciple: Only once. If it is wound indiscriminately, the watch will get spoiled.

H. H.: The same principle applies to this body also. The Sastras say that ordinarily it must be given food twice a day, that on special

occasions food once a day is enough and that on other special occasions there must be fasting. Apart from these restrictions as regards the number of times, the Sastras prescribe also what articles of food may be used, from whom they may be received, how to eat them, and so on. Only if we strictly conform to these prescriptions, can the body function as an instrument of Dharma. If we ignore them and take in whatever we get and wherever we get it without any kind of restraint or regulation, we shall be spoiling the body just as the man who keeps on winding a watch whenever he likes. Our body will then not only cease to be an instrument of Dharma but will become unhealthy.

Disciple: In these days it is very difficult to conform to these prescriptions, particularly when we move out of our villages. For example, if a disciple from the southern districts desires to come here direct to Sringeri, he has to do his ablutions in a summary manner at places like Jolarpet, Bangalore and Shimoga and take such light food as he can get in those places. He has necessarily to content himself with what is available in the railway station hotels.

H. H.: There is no such necessity. Nothing untoward will happen if he fasts for a day or two. Further, fruits will be available everywhere

If he knows that he cannot get them on his way, he may himself take some with him. Anyhow I see no necessity for going to a hotel. There is no reason for such a conduct other than want of faith.

The mind will be pure only if the food we take is pure. We forget this and are intent upon nourishing the body neglecting the aspect of mental purity. This is not proper. If one sincerely believes that his body is primarily an instrument of Dharma, he will never entertain the idea of nourishing it in ways opposed to Dharma. Some people would say "How can we paint on a wall which is not well kept?" and offer this principle as justifying their nourishing the body. It may be generally stated that such people have no idea at all of ever painting but are intent solely on strengthening and polishing the wall. They will never have done with such services to the wall and the painting postponed till after they are completely done will never therefore be done. The body is every moment undergoing change and is being affected by the external elements and past sins unintermittently how is it possible to keep it steady and stable even for a moment? The wall is a mud wall and it is incessantly raining. When are we to see the end of the process of putting up the wall? By its very nature the body is full of

several kinds of impurities. Every moment fresh impurities are being manufactured inside it. If we have a dip in a river, to wash our body free from any kind of dirt and ascend the steps secure in the thought that we have purified it, we begin to perspire even in the coming up. While so, how is it possible to keep it absolutely pure? We have no other alternative but to conform to the dictates of the Sastras and make the body engage itself in the pursuit of Dharma as best as we can.

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The Absolute Reality, Brahman, is described as incapable of being reached either by words or by thought. It may be asked—if it is really so, why should we exercise our powers of speech or our powers of conception to do the impossible? Is not all such endeavour mere waste? It would seem therefore that it is quite unnecessary to speak about it or think about it. The significance of the Upanishad passage is quite the other way. If we say of a person that he did not reach Kasi but returned without reaching it, we can do so only if he had started on a journey to Kasi, made a good progress in his journey, had almost reached Kasi, but by some reason was prevented for

entering that holy place and then returned. We cannot say "He has returned without reaching Kasi" of any person who never had any idea of going there at all or who has not stepped out of his village. Similarly, when Brahman is said to be beyond the reach of words or thought, we must consider to whom it is said. The statement must relate only to the one who has tried to peep into it. It cannot relate to any person who has not even stepped into the path leading to it. He must have exercised his powers of expression and then only can he realise that Brahman is beyond their reach. Till such a state of realisation is reached, words in the shape of the Veda and in the shape of the Guru's teachings are indispensable; similarly, cogitation, contemplation and other processes of the mind are absolutely necessary. That state can be reached only as a resultant of all these necessary stages. By such training the mind becomes pure and sharp enough to function as a proper instrument for the realisation of the self. How the mind is able even then to grasp Brahman is a different question.

It is said that in the order of creation the subtle elements are the evolutes of the power of Maya, called also Avyakta the unmanifest,

inherent in God, that from the Satvika aspects of these subtle elements are born the collective mind and the individual faculties of perception, that from the Rajasa aspects of the same subtle elements are born the faculties of action. Thus Maya is the material cause of the mind and the senses. They cannot possibly comprehend its own source Maya. While so, how can they have the capacity to comprehend Brahman which transcends Maya? They cannot therefore directly point out Brahman but it is only through them that we can comprehend it.

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Disciple: It is said in the system of Advaita that bondage and liberation are both purely relative and have no real significance and that we are always Brahman. If so, why do we not perceive the Brahmanhood now?

H. H: When you are seeing the illusory snake in the rope, why is the rope not seen by you? When you are really looking at the rope, the rope is not visualised by you and the snake which is not there presents itself to your vision. Similarly, it is even when you are really looking at the self it is not perceived by you, as the body and other factors which are non-self hide the self within and offer

themselves as the objects of your perception. Just as the non-perceiving of the rope is responsible for the perceiving of the snake, the non-perceiving of the self is the reason for our mistaking the body etc., as the Self. This non-perceiving of the Self is known as Nescience or Ignorance (*Avidya* or *Ajnanam*).

Disciple: It is said that Maya and Avidya and other terms denote the same thing and it is said at the same time it cannot be described. How else are we to know it?

H. H: Suppose there is an article in a room and we ask a servant to fetch it. If the room is dark, he will take a lamp with him, throw a flood of light into the room, make it envelop the desired article, pick it out and then bring it to us. This is the usual procedure. Suppose now that a person does not know what darkness is and asks us, "What is darkness?" If we take him into a dark cave and tell him "What is here is darkness", he will at once say, "I do not see anything!" If we tell him "Darkness is that itself", he will not understand us. He has been accustomed to use a light to see things not visible before. He may reasonably ask "Darkness is not perceived by me. As it is the function of light to make visible all that was not visible, why not I bring

a light to make darkness visible to me ? ” The only method of dealing with him is to ask him to bring a lamp and direct its beams into the cave. Darkness will immediately disappear and so darkness cannot be pointed out to him. In the first stage, darkness could not be pointed out as nothing was visible ; in the later stage, darkness could not be pointed out as it has ceased to exist. All the same, it is quite possible to give him a conception of darkness by saying “ That, enveloped by which the things in the cave could not be seen by you and which automatically disappears as soon as light comes in, is Darkness.” Similarly, Avidya may be defined as that by reason of which the ever present Self is not perceived and which disappears immediately on the dawn of knowledge.

Disciple : It is understandable that Avidya being similar to darkness is incapable of conception. But how does it happen that the Self which is said to be ever luminous is hidden by Avidya.

H. H : Does the snake really hide the rope on which it seems ? Even when the snake is seen, the rope is shining forth as ever before. The seeming snake cannot in any way affect the real rope. Even when a cloud is hiding the sun

from our view, the sun being far above the cloud is quite untainted by it and is resplendent as ever before. He is never clouded. We attribute cloudedness to him. That is our mistake.

Disciple: If the self is thus ever existing and ever shining, where is the need for any effort to realise it?

H. H: Certainly there is no need at all.

Disciple: But we do not perceive the self now. How can it be said that no effort is required?

H. H: If it is not perceived, effort is required to get rid of that non-perception. No effort is necessary for perceiving the self but effort is necessary to get over the non-perception of it.

Disciple: Does this not mean virtually that effort is necessary for perceiving the self?

H. H: No. The destruction of Avidya is alone the result of effort. All kinds of spiritual effort detailed in the Vedas are aimed only at destroying Avidya and not as means of realising the Self.

Disciple: Some passages like "He who knows Brahman attains the Highest" seem to

imply that the state of liberation is something to be attained later on and not a present state.

H. H: Quite true. Thought and expression are within the world of duality. It is not possible to define the Highest Reality through them. If however they attempt to define it, they must do it only in their own way. They cannot do it in any other way. They have therefore to use such words as "attains", "reaches" and so on. We must not understand these words literally.

Let us take an example. A merchant after the day's transactions are over, writes up the accounts and hands them over to his son saying, "See whether the daybook, the ledger and the cash balance tally". The son accordingly verifies the accounts and makes the necessary additions and subtractions. He finds that the actual cash balance tallies with the balance shown in the daybook. On totalling the ledger abstract however he finds that there is a difference of two annas. He comes to his father and tells him "I do not find two annas." The father replies "Where can it go? It must be there Look well!" Then the boy goes into the accounts more carefully, finds that he has made a mistake in addition somewhere, corrects the error and goes to his father and triumphantly

and gladly proclaims "The two annas have been found." Where had this amount gone when he said that it was not found and where did it come from when he announced that he had found it out? It was not found on the floor nor did anybody bring it. If it had newly come in, the cash balance must have been affected; then again the accounts would not tally. The real truth is just what the father said, "It must be there itself. Look carefully." Thus this sum, though actually never lost or never found, is talked of at one stage as lost and at a later stage as found. Similarly, it is said of the self in one stage that it is not perceived and in another that it is perceived. Though the sum was never lost, it was necessary to scan the accounts carefully to find out and correct the mistake which gave rise to the thought that it was lost. Similarly, though the Self is ever shining and is never lost, effort is required to get rid of the mistake which is responsible for the non-perception of the Self. This mistake, this hiding factor, which screens the Self must be eradicated. When the merchant said "Look carefully," he did not mean "Look at the two annas" but only "Find out the mistake which makes you think that it is lost and remove that mistake." He could not possibly have meant "Earn two annas and bring it." Similarly, the passages requiring us to know

CHAPTER XVII

THE ASCENSION

In reciting the several instances mentioned before, I am quite conscious that they do only illustrate, and that very inadequately, the outward fringe of His Holiness' greatness and they can never bring out His inner glory. I can go on giving similar instances indefinitely and I am sure that the several persons who have had the fortune of having contact with Him will have with them an unlimited store of similar anecdotes. All of them will go to prove that His Holiness was not an ordinary individual who had in the usual way worked up his way to spiritual eminence but one on whom the mantle of the glory of God had descended for the uplifting of erring humanity. But His method of uplifting laid more emphasis on example than on precept. It is true that He was freely giving advice or initiation when sincerely sought but by the standard of life He set up for Himself He made people hesitate a great deal before approaching Him. He used to say 'Is there really any need for the preaching of Dharma ? People, the most ignorant of them, know that it is sinful to utter a falsehood or to cheat or injure anybody. They know this quite well without any need to be taught. Are they observing these simple

rules in their conduct? Let them practise what they know is proper. It will be time enough to consider higher spiritual duties.' He was quite confident that if the aspirant was really sincere he would be helped on to further stages by the ever-watchful God. He once said "Do you think that Sri Chandramouliswara and Sri Sarada cannot bless the disciples who are living far away from Sringeri and cannot come there often?" This observation applied equally well to Him. There have been many an instance of sincere disciples who have had their doubts and difficulties solved not by going to Sringeri and invoking His Blessings in person but by intense longing and vivid recalling to one's mind His divine personality, His gracious look and His benign smile. This has been quite enough to give them what all they wanted.

When His Holiness was entering the sixtieth year of His earthly life, some ardent disciples conceived the idea of celebrating the event in a fitting manner but His Holiness definitely discouraged the idea. But when He found that they did not intend to make it a function of secular tamasha but intended to arrange for an Adirudra Homa and a Sahasrachandi Homa. He approved of the proposal but declined to have it in any way connected with His own birthday. The functions were

therefore performed for the general welfare of the world in the middle of 1953 long after He had passed His sixtieth year. The functions were unique in their nature, especially the Sahasrachandi Homa which had not been performed for over 150 years, that is, after the time of Tippu Sultan who had it performed in the Mutt. The functions naturally attracted a large concourse of people from all parts of India. The well-known trait of His Holiness to retire into Himself and avoid publicity of any sort only whetted the curiosity and longing of the people to see Him. His Holiness acquainted Himself with the details of the arrangements made, graciously gave His blessings and gave an assurance that God would accept the offerings and would in token thereof send down a shower of rain at the time of the principal oblation in the sacred fire. But He was not for coming out either to see the expectant crowd or to be seen by it. I am sure that in that gathering of several thousands not one would have failed to keep His Holiness ever present in his heart with an intense longing to see Him in flesh and blood. But if He had so appeared and given the crowd the Darsana they wanted, they would have forgotten Him the next moment and would have lost the inestimable advantage of lodging Him in their hearts for days together.

A few weeks after these functions, He came out and resumed His normal routine and was also pleased to receive and bless the disciples as He used to do of old. It is worthy of mention that it was during this period that Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the President of the Indian Union, paid his respects to His Holiness, and had the rare fortune of being closetted with His Holiness in edifying conversation in Sanskrit for nearly an hour and receiving His inestimable blessings.

Within a few days thereof, finding that the stock of Prarabdh Karma which gave Him this embodiment had been exhausted and that it was time for Him to shuffle off this mortal coil, He decided upon doing it Himself in the way familiar to the Seers of old. On Sunday the 26th of September 1954, he got up very early in the morning even when it was dark and walked towards the river Tunga. A servant followed at a slight distance. His Holiness stepped into the water. The servant said "The water there is deep". His Holiness coolly said "I know" and went further, had a dip in the water, stood up and did Pranayama and Sankalpa and then dipped into the water again. In a few seconds, His body floated down the current. In consternation the servant jumped in and caught it up but in the effort lost his consciousness with the result

that both the bodies had to be brought ashore by a third person who was at a distance and heard the cry of the servant for help. The servant was soon restored to life. But nothing could be done in the other case. It is said that His Holiness' body was in an erect sitting posture with legs crossed as at the time of contemplation and that it was straightened out only in an attempt to restore respiration. There were no signs of drowning or of suffocation or of any struggle for life. His Holiness had ever been in the best of health and His passing away naturally baffled all doctors, just as he was baffling them even when He was alive. In life and in death, He was equally an enigma to all who sought physical explanation for spiritual experiences. Thus passed away His Holiness from our earthly eyes, plunging His disciples, throughout the length and breadth of India, in intense grief. His sacred body was duly interred in a site just on the left of the Samadhi of His illustrious predecessor. It may be mentioned that the day of His disappearance was the Mahalaya Amavasya day when Goddess Sri Sarada was to be given the annual Abhisheka preliminary to the Navaratri Puja beginning the next day. His Holiness' annual aradhana would therefore synchronise with

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Sri Sarada's Navaratri Abhisheka and is perhaps an indication of His oneness with Her.

After all the ceremonies were over His Holiness Sri Abhinava Vidya Tirtha Swaminah who had been adopted as a successor as early as 1931 and had since then been in close attendance upon His Holiness and had His gracious blessings in abundance was formally installed on the Vyakhyana Simhasana. Now that His Holiness has been freed from the embodiment and the limitations of form, time and space, and has become one with the Godhead, we can get His Holiness's divine blessings wherever we are, if only we earnestly think of Him. He was in our midst in human form for more than sixty years and if we have not profitted the least yet and are still in the meshes of ignorance, it is certainly no fault of His. It was for us to seek His divine presence, profit by it and bask in the sun of His resplendent glory. It is well to remind ourselves now and then of the fact that we had an inestimable treasure which was quite within our reach and open to utilise if only we had cared.

The beautiful scenery of Sringeri and the wealth of the Sringeri Mutt do attract many a person to Sringeri; but in enjoying the salubrious climate and the hospitality of the Mutt, they

very often forget the divine personality of His Holiness which is really the most valuable thing at Sringeri. Even those who are fortunate enough to approach Him do not in any appreciable measure recognise His greatness. They find in Him simplicity, deep learning, intense faith, universal love and so on and content themselves with giving Him in abundance mental (and very often verbal) certificates about His greatness. Does He stand in need of them? The real question is—how have we profitted by the contact with Him? Have our minds become pure? We may be proud of having such a saint for our Acharya. But is that pride justifiable unless and until we qualify ourselves to call ourselves His disciple? I have seen some fashionable friends who are using beautifully carved images of Sri Vighneswara as paper-weights. Our admiration for His Holiness will be only of that sort if we do not seek inner communion with Him. Even for such seeking, we require His gracious blessings. May God grant us the necessary faith and earnestness to earn such blessings from this ineffable fountain of wisdom and mercy that has passed beyond our physical sight but is ever accessible to the earnest seeker!

The first public act of His Holiness the new Acharya was the characteristically noble anno-

uncement to the world that His earnest ambition was to follow rigidly in the footsteps of His revered Guru. The disciples have every confidence that with the blessings of His Holiness and the divine grace of Sri Sarada His ambition will be fulfilled soon so that He may in an adequate measure remedy the loss which the world has sustained by the disappearance of His Holiness, the late Acharya. It is the earnest prayer of all disciples that He may long preside over the Mutt and continue its noble tradition of learning and spiritual eminence and bless the world.

जयतु जयतु नित्यं चन्द्रमौलिर्महेशो
 जयतु जयतु नित्यं शारदाऽभीष्टदात्री ।
 जयतु जयतु नित्यं शंकरो देशिकेन्द्रो
 जयतु जयतु नित्यं चन्द्रचूडो गुह्यः ॥

॥ शुभमस्तु ॥